











# THE LOST DAUGHTER;

AND OTHER

## STORIES OF THE HEART.

BY

MRS. CAROLINE LEE HENTZ:

AUTHOR OF "LINDA," "COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE," "RENA," "EOLINE,"  
"PLANTER'S NORTHERN BRIDE," "LOVE AFTER MARRIAGE," ETC.

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THE PLANTER'S DAUGHTER.

THE

# PLANTER'S DAUGHTER.

## A Tale of Louisiana.

“Beauty gives  
The features perfectness, and to the form  
Its delicate proportions: she may stain  
The eye with a celestial blue—the cheek  
With carmine of the sunset; she may breathe  
Grace into every motion, like the play  
Of the least visible tissue of a cloud:  
She may give all that is within her own  
Bright cestus—and one glance of intellect,  
Like stronger magic, will outshine it all.”—*Willis*.

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# THE PLANTER'S DAUGHTER.

## CHAPTER I.

*Indes Place  
in Louisiana*

THE autumn sun lay on the long stretches of level green-sward, possessing a beauty of its own which the dwellers among mountain scenery will scarcely be willing to concede ; yet if one of these had seen the vivid green of the earth, the varied hues of the foliage, together with the lucid southern atmosphere filled with the golden haze of a brilliant sunset, the beholder must have admitted that the great Father of all has not forgotten to shower beauties peculiar to each portion of his wide-spread domain.

Fields of luxurious cane stretched away as far as the eye could reach. The sugar-house, built of brick, and looking like a huge castle, stood far back from the river, while the planter's dwelling was placed directly in front of a sweeping bend in the mighty Father of Waters, but sufficiently distant to afford a wide road between the lawn that lay in front of it, and the verdant levee which here rose to the height of thirty feet above the land around it, and also a wide lawn, on which groups of the beautiful water oak made a pleasant shade.

One of these trees was a patriarch among its kind, and centuries must have elapsed since it first grew, a tiny bud, from the fruitful soil which gave to it such luxuriant development. Three immense stems sprang from a single root, and

were twisted curiously together, as if a child in sport had twined the tender saplings in their infancy, and they had taken the form thus given them. Each shoot had now grown into an immense tree of itself, and spreading out laterally, cast its protecting shadow over a space which would have measured more than half an acre in extent. Many of the limbs curved upward, and in several of the most romantic situations, seats had been placed which were easily reached from the ground, even by one unaccustomed to climbing.

This tree stood at the end of an old-fashioned French house, two stories high, with a pointed roof in the centre, from which rose a stack of chimnies. A wing of more modern construction had been added on each side, rendering the mansion large and convenient, though externally by no means a model of architectural elegance. Wide galleries, supported by massive pillars, surrounded it, and there was an air of substantial comfort about it, which seemed to indicate the character of its hospitality.

On the side opposite the patriarchal tree, was an inclosure, of considerable size, filled with fine shrubbery, and many beautiful flowers yet bloomed there.

Surely this should be the home of contentment, peace, and love. Its fair outward seeming should be but a type of its inward loveliness. It is difficult to look on a beautifully embellished home, and not believe it to be tenanted by spirits at peace with themselves, and contented with the lot awarded them on earth.

Yet such is unhappily far from always being the case: the curse of our fallen nature, discontent, comes everywhere; and

is oftenest found among those who toil not for their daily bread. The same feeling which caused Alexander to weep that there were no more worlds to lavish his superabundant energies in conquering, often causes his humbler brother, amid the quiet abundance of a lot which seems stripped of every care, to repine for the excitement of which his nature feels the need, and he will often seek it in sources ruinous alike to health and fortune.

The windows facing the front gallery all opened to the floor, and as the evening sun declined toward the horizon, the green blinds protecting one of these were unclosed, and the master of the mansion, a healthy, florid man of fifty, stepped from it. It is a frank, handsome face, on which the evening light glances, yet in the dark blue eye, and the closing of the well cut lips, a daring spirit, and a strong will, are legibly impressed.

Life had evidently gone well with Mr. Harrington, though one bitter sorrow had prematurely whitened the hair, which, at fifty, lay in silver waves above his brow, scarcely threaded by a line of black; yet his cheek glowed with health, and the bland expression of his mouth when engaged in conversation, proved that ill-temper and repining claimed no share in bleaching the dark locks, amid which the fingers of her he had loved as man seldom loves, had so often strayed.

They, alas! were dust, and a few weeks of suffering from this great bereavement, sufficed to silver the hair over which but thirty summers had then shone. Since that great anguish, a wide gulf of twenty years had grown up, but as it regarded the memory of his lost Adèle, it was to him as a single day.

The bitterness of early bereavement was gone, but in his deep heart he cherished the beloved image, and daily she stood before his imagination in all the young beauty which had been so soon snatched from him.

No other woman had ever touched his heart, and no step-mother came to his home to rule over his children. A son and two daughters had grown to maturity beneath the indulgent care of their father, and the almost maternal love of his only sister, a maiden lady but few years younger than Mr. Harrington himself.

The practical good sense, and even temper of Miss Gertrude Harrington, had enabled her to supply the place of the mother they had lost, and the children grew beneath her fostering care, without cause to feel a regret for the parent who had been taken from them before they were old enough to feel the calamity.

The son, Victor, was now a young man of twenty-three, and the twin daughters had just completed their twentieth year—quite a mature age for unmarried ladies in Louisiana; but Miss Harrington had impressed her own ideas on the subject of marriage on her nieces, and they both seemed decidedly of the opinion that unless they were irrevocably in love, they had better remain in their happy home, the darlings of their beloved father, and their adopted mother.

As the twins were fastidious, and much more highly cultivated than is common among their sex in their native State, they were not likely to rush into matrimony from the vulgar fear that the epithet of old maid might be applied to them. They loved and valued one of that class, and after all, there

was nothing so terrible in living as Aunt Gertrude had lived. She was happy, and useful, and made a noble use of the great boon of life; why then should they deprecate the fate which she had preferred to a wretched lot with the lost and unhappy being it had been her misfortune to love in her girlhood; for the fair and placid Miss Harrington had loved with a truth and fervor of which half the wedded dames are utterly incapable.

The memory of this love kept her single many years; then the death of her brother's wife, and the helplessness of the infant children thus bereaved, gave her a home and a position she was peculiarly qualified to fill. During all these long years, suitors had not been wanting, for she was still fair and attractive, but none of them came so near her heart as the little beings who clung to her with the fondest affection, and their suit was accordingly denied.

As Mr. Harrington shaded his eyes with his hands, and looked out upon the long sweep of gleaming water, as if in expectation of the appearance of a boat on its smooth surface, another window quietly opened, and from it came forth a stately matronly figure rather above the medium height, clad in a dark gray silk made to cover the throat and the arms down to the slender and well formed hands. A small embroidered collar fastened with a cameo pin, and a cap of fine lace, very becomingly arranged, completed her costume.

Dark silky-looking hair lay in smooth bands above a broad and lineless brow, on which candor and sincerity were stamped. Her eyes, like those of her brother, were of a deep violet blue, but they often assumed a darker hue in moments of excited feeling; there was good humor and benevolence in

their genial sparkle, and upon the well-shaped mouth, the same characteristics were impressed. It was a face one could trust, for the least observant intuitively felt that neither deceit nor guile were concealed beneath that attractive smile and winning address.

She approached Mr. Harrington, and placed her hand upon his shoulder, before he was aware of her presence.

"For whom are you watching with such keen interest, brother?" asked a clear, sweet-toned voice. "Three times within the last hour, I have seen you scan the river, as if in eager expectation of an arrival."

Mr. Harrington seemed slightly annoyed at this inquiry, but he replied with great good humor,

"Why, Gertrude, it is packet-day, and I am expecting quite a supply of comestibles for our birth-day party."

"You are not usually so anxious about such things, brother, as to become restless for the arrival of the packet. Is that all you are expecting?" asked the lady, raising her penetrating eyes to his face.

"Pooh! why should you question one so? Who or what should I expect, pray?"

"A letter from that daring speculator, Mr. Malcolm, or perhaps his own visible presence," she quietly replied.

Mr. Harrington started, and his face flushed, but before he could reply, his sister went on with a persuasive earnestness of manner which should have produced a greater effect:

✓ "Brother, beware of that man. He tempts you to what may end in ruin, instead of increasing your present possessions. He is reckless, and, I am afraid, unprincipled. As a



capitalist, he probably seeks you ; but after he has fairly obtained the control of your means, I am sadly afraid he may be unscrupulous in the use of them. Under any circumstances, they will be used to his own advantage, whatever the result may be to you."

"I have heard you patiently, Gertrude, because I generally have great respect for your judgment; but in this matter I hold my own to be superior to it. You speak very harshly of a most honorable gentleman. Every security has been offered me by Malcolm, that the most exacting could demand. I am quite satisfied of his power to fulfill every pledge he has given."

"Yet why, my dear Charles, should you at your age plunge into speculations that must unsettle your quiet life, and render you a victim to constant fears as to the result? You were, in your early manhood, so fortunate as to accumulate wealth: why then will you disturb your declining years with such uncertain things as speculations?"

"It is true, Gertrude, I was fortunate in my youth, and by my own energy and daring gained what I now possess. It is a good fortune for one man, but an indifferent portion when divided among five."

"Wherefore shall it be thus divided?"

"How can you ask such a question? My son is now old enough to desire an establishment of his own; and his approaching union with his cousin renders it desirable that I should give him a plantation. This I can not at present afford, for I can not bear the thought of abating my usual style of hospitality, and my whole income barely suffices to

maintain it. My daughters will marry; whence shall come portions for them suited to the style in which they have been reared, if I do not enter the arena anew? My pride is greatly concerned in all this, and I am willing to risk something for their future good."

"Ah, poor and false pride!" murmured Miss Harrington. "I trust in God it may not be too severely punished." She then asked,

"If your income is annually spent, how is the money for the proposed speculations to be raised?"

"O, that is easy enough to a man possessed of my property. There is absolutely no risk of failure, and I shall raise what I need by mortgaging my crops for a few years to come. Do not annoy me with your croaking, Gertrude, for I have gone too far to recede, and to tell you the truth, I am expecting Malcolm on the packet this evening."

"I feared as much," replied Miss Harrington, sighing deeply. "Since it is too late for remonstrance, brother, I will refrain from it; but do you know that this Mr. Malcolm aspires to the hand of one of your daughters?"

An emotion of displeased surprise gleamed athwart the features of Mr. Harrington, but it was immediately checked, and, after a brief pause, he replied:

"It is well. I have pronounced him an honorable man, and I truly believe him to be such. If my child accepts his suit, I shall not cross her wishes."

"If Adèle is as easily won over as you are, I suppose we may have a bridal before long," said Miss Harrington, coldly.

"Adèle; no, no!" exclaimed the father, almost passionately. "I thought he most admired Pauline. Adèle is my own, own darling. Malcolm is fond of travel; he would seldom remain stationary, and his wife must be the companion of his wanderings. I could struggle with my own regrets, and bear to be parted from the child that most resembles myself; but Adèle—no, no, she is like the angel in heaven; her voice speaks to me in the music that charmed my youth. O, I can never suffer Adèle to leave me. Her husband must be to me in all respects as a son. Malcolm must look elsewhere for a bride."

"Then beware how you place yourself in his power," was the impressive response. "He will use it ungenerously, even if his principles should prove sound. But there is the boat, and I will no longer trouble you with my doubts and fears."

Where the glowing sunset was mirrored in the rippling water, a dark object, puffing forth dense volumes of black smoke, and gallantly breasting the current, was seen approaching, and soon the deep boom of the escape-pipe rang through the air its shrill warning of the approach of a fine steamer.

As she came up to the landing, which was not more than thirty yards above the mansion, her guards were crowded with passengers, and among them was one conspicuous from his commanding height, standing on the bow, waving a handkerchief to the group on the piazza, now increased by the appearance of the daughters of the house, who are of too much importance to our story to be introduced at the end of a chapter.

## CHAPTER II.

ENTIRELY unlike were the twin sisters. Pauline was tall, fair, and blue-eyed, with a profusion of soft brown hair worn in plain bands above her well-formed brow. Alone, she would perhaps have been pronounced handsome by many, for there was much to attract in the sweet expression of her face, and the winning grace of her manner. But brought perpetually in contrast with her sister, few thought of her except as a clever and rather good-looking girl.

Adèle was one of those rare women who are invested at their birth with the cestus of Venus, and to the last hour of a lengthened life must still be attractive: she was piquant, graceful, elegant, and always fascinating. Her form was so perfectly proportioned, that no awkward movement could mar its attractiveness, and her features were of equal symmetry. Large, dark, glancing eyes, exquisite in their shape and expression, were veiled by lashes of the raven hue of her tresses, which had often aroused the poetic fervor of her admirers, and no wonder, for they were beautiful in texture, and of such length and abundance, that it required much skill to coil them around the gracefully-molded head, so as not to spoil its fair proportions. When let down, this magnificent chevelure reached the floor as she stood, and lay in

rings around her feet. Hands and arms of sculptured beauty completed the picture, and no poet could have dreamed of a fairer ideal than the living, breathing form of Adèle Harrington.

It is very rare to see a perfectly beautiful woman, but she was undoubtedly that *rara avis* ; and the fame of her charms was widely spread. During an extensive northern tour, she had reigned the undisputed belle wherever she appeared ; and many were the suitors who came to her home, seeking to touch the heart which never yet had felt the bewildering power of love.

Adèle knew that she was beautiful ; but so judicious was the training she had received, that she also knew she must be much more than that, if she wished to retain her hold on the heart her loveliness impressed. The sisters were conscientious, truthful, and God-fearing beings, and withal deeply attached to each other. Pauline, as much fascinated by her sister's attractions as any who approached her, felt no concealed jealousy of that peerless loveliness which so completely eclipsed her humbler charms, and Adèle returned her affection with a truth and sincerity which proved that adulation had not weakened the native warmth of her feelings, nor rendered her insensible to the hallowed tenderness of home affections ; that holy halo which encircled her life, and gave the brightest sunshine she had yet known to the thornless path she had heretofore walked in.

The sisters were dressed alike in delicately-tinted silk, trimmed at the throat and wrists with fine lace ; a knot of gay ribbon, on which glittered a magnificent diamond pin,

was worn upon the breast; and a ring of corresponding elegance adorned each fair hand. A chain so fine as to seem like a thread of gold, supported a small enameled watch at one side.

Mr. Harrington was proud of his fair daughters, and he liked to see them always elegantly attired. The finest Parisian robes were ordered for them, from the most tasteful milliners in that emporium of fashion, and no expense was spared in gratifying the most fastidious fancy either one might have. Their father's liberality was boundless, for he had accumulated wealth so easily, that he dispensed it with a lavish hand.

Mr. Harrington had emigrated from Virginia in his youth, when fortunes were more easily won in the south-west than now. A fortunate investment of his small capital afforded him the means of speculating in land at a period of great depression, when he felt assured that the pressure must soon be removed. His convictions proved correct, and a rapid fortune was accumulated. He purchased the plantation on which he then resided; married the daughter of a French gentleman in the vicinity, of whom he had become violently enamored, regardless that her only dower was her great beauty, and a gentleness of temper which rendered her inexpressibly dear to him.

Then commenced a style of princely hospitality, such as has ruined nearly all the old families in his native State. To do him justice, Mr. Harrington endeavored to keep within the bounds of his income; but few men of lavish habits of expenditure can easily do this, and he least of all. He was an

indulgent and considerate master, and often his crops fell short, though little sickness or mortality was ever found on the Wavertree plantation.

From year to year these deficiencies increased, while the sanguine spirit of the ease-loving owner induced him to hope that a rise in sugar, or some other lucky chance, would enable him to clear himself of the debt which had thus gradually accumulated. Mr. Harrington gave himself little real concern about it, for he was not of a disposition to anticipate trouble, and but one calamity had ever possessed the power to cast a shade over his hitherto fortunate destiny. The death of his adored wife in the fifth year of their union, caused him for a season to give up society; but the arrival of his sister to preside over his household, seemed to arouse his love of social life.

Again he assembled his friends around him, and year after year glided away in the same round of hospitality, until his children were of an age to settle in life. Then, he felt many emotions of regret that he had not set aside a certain portion of his annual income to accumulate for them; but these regrets were speedily chased away by the recollection of his early good fortune. He would again undertake the same game, on a larger scale, and with gains proportionately increased, be able to provide magnificently for those dependent upon him.

At this crisis, Mr. Harrington encountered a man who seemed to him to be sent to him by an especial interposition of Providence.

Mr. Malcolm was an acute man of business; practical, keen-

sighted, and an accurate reader of character. He was the reputed possessor of wealth accumulated by his own skill and energy, and withal he possessed the polished ease and address of an educated man.

With rare command of language, Malcolm communicated his plans to his eager listener, and impressed him with the firm conviction that the speculations undertaken by him, must be successful. He revealed just enough of his proposed enterprises to arouse the desire for gain in the mind of Mr. Harrington, and impress him with a belief in his vast resources, both of intellect and means; and then left the poison to work its legitimate result.

As he had foreseen, that gentleman was soon joined with him in operations which required all the credit both could command; but this was only the first step in the subtle game which Malcolm was playing. A gambler on a magnificent scale he certainly was, and human hopes and fears were the counters in the game: under his dexterous management, fortunes changed hands with magical rapidity, but what mattered it to him if homes were desecrated, hearts broken, if his own ends were gained?

Ruthless as Fate, polished as adamant, and as impassive, was the man into whose power the ease-loving and honorable Mr. Harrington had fallen.

But it is time we should describe him, as it was Malcolm himself who stood on the bow of the steamer, and wafted his salutation to the fair sisters. But few moments elapsed before he stood beside them, greeting the group with a degree of animated cordiality which rendered him a great favorite



with all of the household except Miss Harrington. Her penetration had fathomed the hollowness of that graceful manner, and she felt an intuitive consciousness that he was yet to become the agent of evil to their happy family.

Malcolm was a handsome man, with a singular and pleasing blending of the traits of a Scotch father and Spanish mother. His hair was of a pale golden brown, with eyes of a deep hazel, shaded by brows and lashes so dark as to seem black in a doubtful light. The expressive beauty of his well-cut profile was somewhat marred by the high cheek-bones he had inherited from his paternal race, but his smile was serene and captivating, and he could throw an expression of softness in his darkly beautiful eyes which had beguiled the trusting heart of many a romantic maiden into the belief that he cherished for her a tenderer sentiment than he had ever been guilty of toward any human being, save himself.

His voice was peculiarly winning in its tones, and he was an admirable amateur singer. Every gift had not been lavished on Adèle; her sister was the sweet songstress of Wavertree, and the mutual fondness for music which Pauline and his guest betrayed, had naturally misled Mr. Harrington as to which sister he preferred.

After conversing a few moments with happy animation, Malcolm turned to Pauline and said,

"I have brought you some fine music, Miss Harrington, which I think will suit your voice well. I have heard the new prima donna in it in a rehearsal, and although she comes with a great reputation, I scarcely think her voice so fine as yours."

"Thank you for both the music, and the compliment," said Pauline with a smile, and he turned toward Adèle, with a look which seemed to read her soul as he said, "To you mademoiselle, I venture to offer these beautiful flowers, as the only worthy oblation at your shrine."

She indolently extended her hand, and with a slight inclination of the head received the bouquet, to which every public garden in the vicinity of New Orleans had contributed its rarest flowers. Could she have known at what cost of time and patience it had been procured, how jealously it had been guarded in its transit from the city, she might perhaps have prized it more; but after daintily plucking a few petals from a delicately-tinted rose which formed the centre, Adèle called a servant-girl from the yard below, and transferred the flowers to her care, with injunctions to place them in a vase of water immediately.

The scornful lip of Malcolm slightly curled, and the flash of his eye betokened inward wrath, but he spoke as calmly as though no disappointed feeling rankled in his heart.

Mr. Harrington inquired the latest news from the city.

"There is nothing new, I believe," he replied; "all alarm from fever has passed away, but the citizens have as yet scarcely had time to arouse themselves from the paralyzing influence of the heat of summer. I brought with me the daily papers which are at your service. From them you will find that sugar has advanced, and is likely to remain firm."

"Good—so much the better for the agricultural interests," said Mr. Harrington, as he drew forth his spectacles, and was soon deeply absorbed in the news of the day, while Malcolm

turned to Pauline, and together they entered the parlor to try some of the songs he had brought with him. Soon a blended strain of rare melody was wafted from the open windows, and Adèle smiled as her heart whispered, "he will like Pauline best, if I show him how cold I am to all his advances; she never before appeared so much pleased with any stranger. He seems good and noble—my father would like the match, I think, and I shall not permit a useless preference for me to stand in the way of Pauline's happiness. Oh! poor and perishing beauty, why should you attract so many, when my sister is so much better worth winning than I?"

And thereupon Adèle fell into a reverie on a story she had just finished reading, in which mental beauty was held up as the most desirable of all possessions, and she came to the sage conclusion that such was not the decision of the world in which she lived.

Miss Harrington went below stairs to superintend the storing of the various articles ordered from New Orleans for the approaching birth-day fête of the only son. The boat departed on her way, and a group approached the house, consisting of that young gentleman, accompanied by several guests who were staying at Wavertree, for the mansion was rarely destitute of company. As they are of little importance to our story, we need describe none of them except Victor Harrington.

Nearly as beautiful as his sister, Adèle, he was too effeminate in appearance to be considered a handsome man; vain and self-conceited, he considered himself the "glass of fashion and the mould of form," and the exquisite style of his toilette,

proclaimed him at once a dandy of the highest pretensions in that line.

Victor lightly ascended the flight of steps leading to the upper gallery, and approaching Adèle with a little more animation than he usually condescended to manifest, he held out a letter and drawled—

“Malcolm brought this. I must say that Louise seems more than sufficiently charmed with him ; I can't see what there is about the creature to attract you women so much. His dress is decidedly out of ton.”

Adèle laughed. It was a sweet, musical laugh, which the most fastidious would not have been shocked to hear issue from those lovely lips.

“That is what your sex invariably say of an associate who happens to be particularly popular with ours ; vanity and envy confined to women, indeed ! No greater slander was ever uttered, as I could prove to you, brother of mine, if I had time, or thought it would produce any good result. I will, however, point out one of Mr. Malcolm's good qualities : he is manly, and does not choose to imitate the affectations of the feminine race, as do some I could name ; but I will not be ill-natured. Give me the letter of Louise ; I am impatient to learn when she will join us.”

“Oh, in time for the ball ; she will be sure not to miss that,” replied Victor, in a moody tone. “I suspect Louise would have hurried her motions if she had known a little sooner that Malcolm would come to-day, and remain a week.”

“For shame, brother ! Why should you judge Louise so

harshly? There is nothing in this letter but the nonsense of a very young girl, elated at the prospect of her first ball."

She glanced over the sheet of rose-colored paper she held, profusely ornamented with Cupids wreathed in flowers, and highly perfumed. It was addressed to herself, although Victor, in his impatience to hear from the writer, had taken the liberty of opening it. The missive which had produced such unpleasant feelings in his mind contained these words :

"DEAR COZ :

"Mr. Malcolm came himself with your despatch. I was charmed to make his acquaintance, for I think him a most delightful person. So handsome—so distingué—the last a most uncommon merit among my countrymen. I wonder if my baby face made any impression on him; yet how could I hope such a thing, when he has seen and knows you. *N'importe*—I mean to be a belle (if ma will give me time before she marries me off), and who knows but this same magnificent Celtic Spanish man may eventually be one of my conquests?

"I was dying to come up this week to Wavertree, but that odious Mademoiselle F. did not finish my ball dress in time, and I could not think of leaving without that. It would be Venus without her girdle, for I intend to do great execution in this same dress. I learn that your fête is to be quite a fairy scene—you will be the Armida, Pauline the Minerva of the evening, and I will content myself with being as happy as a queen ought to be, though I am afraid they are not often really so.

"Tell Victor I have not forgotten my engagement to dance

the first Polka with him ; I have been taking some new steps which are very graceful ; I will teach them to him, and we will practice together for our grand exhibition. After all, Victor is the very best dancer I know, and shows one off to such advantage when one really can dance.

“There is a poor wandering minstrel playing on a violin in the street, nearly opposite my window, and my feet will scarcely keep still, so impatient are they to tread the mazy round at a real ball.

“I am sixteen to-morrow, and ma has at last consented that I shall make my débüt. I wonder if my heart will always be as joyful as it is now. Good-by, sweet coz, and believe, feather-brain as I am, that I love you always.

“LOUISE RUSKIN.

“P. S. Present me to Aunt Gertrude, uncle, and Pauline, and look for me on the next packet. I send no remembrance to Victor, because on an occasion of such importance, I think he might have come down for the purpose of escorting me to Wavertree. I forgot to say that ma will accompany me, though that is a matter of course ; only it would not be courteous to omit all mention of my respected maternity in this hair-brained epistle.

L. R.”

Adèle read the letter through with much amusement, and then offered it to her brother.

“I really can see nothing offensive to you in that girlish nonsense, Victor. You expect too much of Louise, and I warn you she has no idea of romantic constancy to one object just now. If you really wish Louise to be happy as your

wife, you must let her enjoy her first youth, and allow time for the effervescence of a very joyous spirit to subside into the steadiness required in one who assumes the cares of married life."

"Cares of married life, indeed!" repeated Victor, mockingly. "When will Aunt Gertrude speak again through your lips, I wonder. As if I wish Louise to be dull and stupid—in short, otherwise than she now is, in order to become my wife. No, I love the very mad-cap spirit that rules her, and I would not exchange her for the best pattern girl I know; not even one fashioned by our good aunt herself. She makes girls too sensible by half, as was proved by your last speech."

He sauntered into the house, carefully folding the letter with which he had been so greatly displeased, and it was soon placed among his choicest possessions. Adèle smiled as she looked after him, and she thought,

"After all, Victor has genuine feeling left, in spite of his affectation and nonsense. Yet my giddy little Louise will never elevate him above his present standard. Why could he not have chosen differently? There are women in the world who might have made Victor quite a different being from his present self. Yet would those women have loved him, or he them? Ah, my own heart answers no. Like will seek its like, and he has made as good a selection as the nature of things permitted. There are such things as the 'heart's own country people,' I well know. I wonder if I shall ever find one even half equal to my ideal. Ah, that entrancing melody! One more look at the setting sun, and I must go in and join them."

The young girl drew near her father, and placed her hand in his, as he too turned his chair toward the declining luminary which cast a golden haze over the whole horizon. No clouds veiled its splendor, and the vapor hovering near the earth reflected only the yellow rays in a golden glory over the landscape. No chilling blast of winter had yet breathed over its loveliness, though the foliage had begun to assume the changeful hues of autumn, imparting a variety doubly welcome, after the unbroken verdure of summer.

The land on the opposite side of the river was hilly and uncultivated, and the deep forest stretched down to the water's edge.

Mr. Harrington fondly clasped the hand which was placed in his own, and passing his arm around the slender form of his daughter, drew her close beside him. He spoke with tender melancholy vibrating in the tones of his voice :

"Ah, my child, this carries me back to other times, and I could almost fancy the past twenty years a fantasy, and my own lost one standing beside me as in the days of yore. Promise me one thing, Adèle : that you will never leave me while I live ; that I shall feel the clasp of your soft fingers in my dying hour."

"Dearest father, why exact such a promise ? Do I not love you best of all on earth ? Who but your own darling should be beside you in that solemn hour ? Yet speak not of it, for it saddens my heart to allude to so mournful an event, however distant it may be."

"Yet we must all die, my child ; and sometimes I fancy the summons for me may not be so far off. But you evade



my request, Adèle. My sister's surmise can not be correct, and your heart be favorably inclined toward this new acquaintance. You would not leave your father's hearth desolate, to carry joy into the home of Malcolm?"

Adèle answered gravely,

"I would not; for I have never felt the slightest emotion of preference for him."

"Right, right, my bonny bird! yet Malcolm would be a brilliant match in the opinion of the world. If he and Pauline should like each other, it would be well; but you, my precious Adèle, must never leave me. The light of that day in which I could not behold you, would be odious to me."

"Hush, hush, dear father. Place me not so far above the others in your affections—so far above my deserts."

"God knows I love them all dearly, but he also knows that he gave you your mother's form, to keep my heart from utterly breaking in that deep sea of anguish which so long flooded my soul. But the lamps are lighted in the parlors; let us go in and join the party there."

And thus in social excitement, shaking off the creeping shadows which often come over the heart in twilight, even as the earth darkens with the departure of the sun, Mr. Harrington, in the gorgeously-furnished, and brilliantly-lighted saloon, soon cast aside all sadness, and joined in the mirthful converse as easily, and apparently with as much enjoyment, as the most youthful of the group. His was a genial temperament, and to see others happy around him, reflected at least the light of contentment on his own bosom.

### CHAPTER III.

AFTER tea was served, Miss Harrington joined the party, and played chess with one of the elder guests. Pauline seemed to be the guiding spirit among the more youthful portion of the company, and Adèle, sought after and flattered as she was, always deferred to her. It was charming to behold the perfect union which subsisted between the two sisters, and the unobtrusive efforts of the more attractive one, to bring forward and show the best points of the other.

Pauline was an admirable hostess, for she seemed intuitively to know what would best suit each individual of the company, and she had a graceful way of saying pleasant things which rendered her charming to all who were not intoxicated by the beauty of her sister.

In the course of the evening, several young planters from the neighborhood joined the circle, and those among the guests who chose to do so, found amusement in different games, at which, however, nothing was staked. The young hostesses never played themselves, as they were too fully occupied in conversing with the different guests.

Malcolm watched Pauline, and he admired the tact with which she provided each one with the amusement best suited to his capacity. He mused on the contrast between the two

sisters, and as he followed the movements of the elder, his eye caught hers, and she smiled with an expression that thrilled his heart with an emotion quite unexpected to himself.

"By heaven!" he thought, "this girl might have made an impression upon me it would have been hard to erase, if I had only met her away from that bewildering creature, her sister. *She* is as cold to me as an icicle, yet one glance upon her peerless loveliness makes me her slave. I can now see some sense in the Eastern law which renders it criminal for a woman to unveil her face to any man save her husband. Were Adèle my wife, I should be jealous of every eye that beheld her charms. I know that she can never render me half as happy as the less attractive sister, yet from the moment I first beheld her, a species of frenzy has possessed me. I know she does not, that she never will love me, but I must and will call her mine, either with her own consent, or if needs be, even without it. Already is the ground-work laid of that plan which must place all she loves at my mercy. Mercy! I have none. From my father I derived my cold, clear intellect, which intercourse with the world has only sharpened; from my mother the passionate nature of her southern race; but neither gave me one impulse of compassion toward the rest of my kind. My Jesuitical preceptor completed the release of my mind from such vulgar prejudices as sway common men. He also taught me to assume any phase of character which would give me influence with the associate of the moment, and for this I owe him thanks. By its power I sway others, and mould them to my will."

He cast a serene, triumphant glance around the room, taking in every person it contained, and finally resting on the bland countenance of Mr. Harrington.

"Unsuspecting good soul! How like wax he is in my hands. How little he dreams of my plans while he hugs himself in the delusion that he is about to increase his fortune by thousands. Fool! why could he not rest content with what he already possessed? It would be quite sufficient to satisfy any man but one who wishes to live *en prince*."

At that instant Adèle glided past him, and as she caught a view of his features, the expression of sarcasm, mingled with something like contemptuous compassion, caused her to pause involuntarily to scan its meaning. The scornful irony visible there must surely be directed toward some one present, and she sought to follow the direction of his eyes. Before she had succeeded, Malcolm, by some species of electrical sympathy which no one has yet been able to explain, became conscious of her proximity. He turned toward her with a smile so winning, that she marveled that the hard, cold face she had recently scrutinized, could now look down upon her with an expression that was almost fascinating.

"You must be a very Proteus, Mr. Malcolm," she said, with a smile. "Just now I was likening you in my own mind to Mephistopheles; so sardonic was the expression with which you regarded our innocent pastimes, in which I am sorry you are too self-absorbed to join. But now, your features have entirely changed their character, and Alcibiades himself could not have worn a more captivating smile."

His face clouded at the first portion of her remarks, but cleared up brilliantly as she concluded. He replied,

"It was certainly not grateful to my vanity to be compared by *you* to Mephistopheles, the fiend, the tempter; but the remainder of your speech compensates for that. Alcibiades was the most elegant and admired man of his day. To be likened to him in any manner, and by lips that must pronounce my fate, is the most delicious of all flattery."

Adèle did not blush as Malcolm had hoped, nor did she betray any emotion at the covert declaration he had ventured to make. He really felt doubtful whether she had heard it at all, for she quietly said,

"Flattery between friends is a poor substitute for sincerity, Mr. Malcolm. It is too vapid and common-place to produce any other emotion than weariness. I came hither to make an effort to draw you from your sombre reverie by proposing to you to join my sister and myself in a duett which several persons have expressed a wish to hear."

"Certainly; a wish of Miss Pauline Harrington's has only to be expressed to be obeyed by me."

With graceful courtesy he offered his arm to conduct her across the spacious apartment to a recess occupied by a fine-toned piano. Adèle tuned her harp in unison with it, Malcolm performed on the flute, and soon the cards and backgammon were deserted, and a charmed group gathered around the performers.

Later in the evening, Victor exhibited an accomplishment he possessed, to the great delight of the company. Gifted like his elder sister with a fine musical ear, he could, by distorting

his lips, and placing his fingers over them in a peculiar manner, produced an accurate imitation of the finest-toned bugle; and he produced with precision the favorite airs of the most celebrated bugle-players of that day. The performance was carried on with his back to the company, for Victor was much too vain of his beauty to distort his features in view of others.

Malcolm was equally surprised and delighted with the others, and as Victor turned smilingly and bowed in reply to the compliments that greeted him, he said to the young man,

"Should fortune ever frown on you, Mr. Harrington, and you should be compelled to gain your own subsistence, you possess a great resource. A theatrical manager would give you your own terms to perform this before his audience."

Victor smiled proudly.

"In the event of such a crisis, I believe I should prefer seeking employment in some more honorable calling."

"A man may render any calling honorable, by his manner of conducting himself in it," replied Malcolm, coldly, as he turned away, half offended at the self-sufficiency of the young exquisite's manner. "Should loss of fortune compel you to exert your own energies, this despised resource may be the only one open to you."

"Malcolm has you there, Victor," said one of the young men, "for I really believe that you excel in nothing else, though you are generally admitted to be a very fascinating young gentleman."

"You are mistaken," drawled Victor. "I am considered

an unexceptionable dancer ; at least my cousin, Louise, thinks so, and she is no mean proficient in the art herself. I believe I should rather teach young, budding beauty to 'trip it on the light, fantastical toe,' than to screw up my phiz nightly for the benefit of a critical audience. After a while, my face might take that set, you know, which would be duecedly unpleasant."

"Decidedly so. Ah, I have thought of a conundrum. Why is Harrington's face like a flute?" and the speaker looked around triumphantly. "Do you give it up?"

"No," responded another youth, dryly. "I can tell that myself. Because it has to be screwed up to get it in tune. But should fortune frown, I am afraid it would require a great deal of courage to screw it up to the tooting point, eh, Victor?"

All laughed at this sally, and the speaker bade them good-evening, with the agreeable conviction that he had said something witty :

"A great bore is that young De Salle," muttered Victor. "In his attempts to be witty he is only impertinent." He then spoke aloud :

"Since I have told my future resource, should evil days come on me, pray let me hear what the remainder of the company would resort to. Since you are so kind as to make a suggestion to me, Mr. Malcolm, I will begin with you."

Malcolm bowed slightly, and made a motion toward the sisters.

"It is but courtesy to give the ladies precedence ; then I will name my resource."

"Very well. I begin with Aunt Gertrude. Speak frankly, aunt, and tell us how you would maintain yourself?"

After a moment of consideration, Miss Harrington said,

"In my girlhood, this question assumed a serious aspect to me; and I considered it in all its bearings. Then I concluded that I was best fitted to train and instruct the young; and I believe I should still select that as my occupation."

"Well said, dear aunt," said Pauline, "for no choice could have been so well suited to you. My turn comes next, I believe. Really, I have never thought on the subject before, and I am a little puzzled to know what I am best fitted for. I possess but one talent—an enthusiastic love for music: but unfortunately I have a fineness of ear, that would render it absolute torture to undertake to give ordinary instruction. Unless I followed Mr. Malcolm's suggestion to Victor, and appeared as a public singer, I believe I could find nothing to suit me."

"You are right, Miss Pauline. Where a gift of such rare perfection as yours has been bestowed, it seems a pity that it should be buried beneath the sunshine of prosperity: it should belong to the world." Thus spoke Malcolm, and Pauline blushed, and her eyes grew brighter as they met his. Again their expression caused that indefinable thrill of emotion, and he asked himself,

"Can I really be attracted by both sisters? The soul of one responds to all that is good in mine, while the mere outward beauty of the other, bewilders and enchants me. I am in a singular position between the two: however, let time and opportunity decide between them."



And thus lightly deciding what was of such vital importance to one at least, Malcolm turned and bowed lowly before Adèle.

"I know not what you can choose, fair lady, for, like the lilies of the field, you seem formed neither to 'toil nor to spin.' "

"Yet their Maker forgetteth not their need," replied Adèle, promptly, "and he has not neglected to endow me with at least one humble resource. I can embroider with such skill as almost to rival the beauty of the flowers from which I copy; such work is always well remunerated, and although I should not become famous like Pauline, I could lead a quiet and respectable life, which would be better suited to my temper than a more public one. Now, Mr. Malcolm, what is your resource? As the last one to speak, you have had more time to reflect on the many paths open to a cultivated and energetic man, and you have, doubtless, chosen well."

"Thank you, but I am afraid my choice will scarcely justify your good opinion of my judgment. I would pursue any employment for which I am fitted until I had accumulated a few hundred dollars, wherewith to speculate. *That* is an occupation which tasks every resource of an active mind. It is a great game, in which fortune and honor are often staked; yet if successful at last, how splendid are the results."

As he spoke, his clear, brown cheek glowed, his eyes lighted up, and his tall figure seemed to dilate with the exulting consciousness of success in whatever he undertook.

The quiet, even tones of Miss Harrington were here heard.

"It seems to me only gambling on a very large scale,

where ruin is more complete, and wide-spread if the financiering fails. I should be sorry to see one I love embark in so perilous a game."

"Nonsense, Gertrude, what should women know about such things?" said Mr. Harrington, hastily.

"It is true, brother, that women know but little of the details, but results they are often compelled to feel most disastrously. But all our guests have not yet spoken," and she turned courteously toward the others.

The most of them had not made up their minds on so intricate a subject as self dependence, and waived a reply. Soon after, the party broke up, and the family retired.

Light gleamed from Malcolm's window until past midnight, and while the rest of the household slept he matured plans likely to deprive many of them of rest for many a night to come. He then addressed the following letter to a confederate in the bold game he was playing.

"DEAR LEVERING:

"You will see from the date of this, that I am again at Wavertree. I shall soon have its magnificent owner completely in my power, for he is charmed by the plans I have developed to him, and as you are aware, has already pledged his credit to the utmost to sustain our enterprises. If they fail, he is ruined—and in that event, we must provide for ourselves as well as we can. I believe they will be successful, but who can foresee results? It is necessary to my ulterior plans that Mr. H. shall be placed completely in my power, and I have an especial bait for him, so suited to my

purpose that I shall propose raising something more substantial than credit, to insure its success. Money must be obtained, and Mr. H. is so liberal that I doubt not that he will promptly and unsuspectingly meet the demand.

"It seems almost a pity to play upon the credulity of so good a man, and I believe I should let him escape with only a slight call on his resources, if money were the only thing at stake. Keep clear of all acquaintance with this household, I warn you Levering, for in it is formed a circle from whose charms there is no escape. Beautiful as the fairest dream that poet-artist ever imagined; fascinating by only a single movement of her hand, or a glance of her eye, yet seeking not to charm. Cold to all proffers of love, almost disdainful to me, yet, I can not do otherwise than worship this magical loveliness. While my eye rests upon Adèle Harrington, I feel that it would be possible to sacrifice truth, honor, every thing save life itself, to call her mine: and mine she shall surely be.

"But—strange anomaly! when she passes from my vision, and the clear soft eye of her sister meets mine; when her seraph voice mingles with mine, in strains that seem almost celestial, the little good that so often lies dormant within me is suddenly aroused, and I feel the conviction that with her, under her sweet influence, I could become a better and a happier man, and do good to others, instead of working their evil, as I now so often do. And this fair Pauline would love me—nay, she loves me now: I have read it in her eyes, when she dreamed not how much they expressed—and I half love her—yet no—Adèle rises up between us, and I repudiate the

thought. She—she alone is my fate and my curse, for she will hate me for the evil I must bring to her and hers, only to bend her to my will. Yet, my resolve is firm as iron, she shall become my future wife, whether love or hate rule our household.

“It is madness, I know, to resolve thus, but I have no power to act otherwise. I believe I would make her mine, if I felt assured in clasping her to my heart, I should be consumed to ashes, as she of old who asked the god to show himself in all the majesty of his divine attributes. Ah! I must cease this rhapsody, for when on this theme I forget myself.

“My host is a fine, generous-hearted man, and were less at stake, I could scarcely find it in my heart to cause that open-handed liberality, which knows no bounds, to be checked in its course. He lives profusely; keeps open house, with every day a dinner of many courses, with the most exquisite wines. Such provision is made for every guest, that on his arrival he feels as if he had been long expected, and arrangements made beforehand for his especial comfort.

“My chamber has a small dressing-room attached to it, and both are furnished with such luxury as would amaze many foreigners, who fancy that in this far away part of the world we are in a state of semi-barbarism. They do not know what a progressive nation we are, and forget the facilities that steam offers for the attainment of any luxury we may possess the means to purchase.

“Adjoining my room is the library; a charmingly lighted apartment with large windows with deeply embayed recesses, such as are only found in old Spanish or French houses. A

venerable tree, which gives a name to the place, rustles its branches against these old-fashioned casements, and affords the most agreeable green twilight, even in the brightest day. This room contains an excellent selection of books, in English, French, and German, for the fair sisters speak with elegance all these languages. Accessions are constantly made to them by new arrivals from the North.

"Mr. Harrington has a table in one of the most retired nooks, devoted to his own use; and on this his political and business papers are daily placed. I have discovered that it is Pauline who arranges these papers so deftly that no dust is permitted to accumulate, yet her father never has cause to complain that they are in confusion. Clever girl, isn't she? but ah! not half so lovely as that other Peri, Muse, Grace—My God! why was this woman made so fair and so cold? Will the voice of passion *never* touch her heart? I firmly believe it never will, but I—

"O I will stop here, lest you think my mind really unhinged. You will find inclosed some directions which you will scrupulously follow, and be sure and write to me by every mail, inform me of every thing relative to our affairs, that I may know when and where to strike: as every thing depends on judgment and skill in our calling.

"I shall probably remain here a week or ten days, as a grand festival comes off some time this week in honor of the birthday of the only son; a weak and beautiful Narcissus who would be quite capable of imitating his prototype, for he is already deeply enamored of his own attractions. How the brother of such sisters can content

himself with being a mere common-place exquisite, is beyond my comprehension.

"There is also another member of the family circle who should not have been mentioned last. Miss Gertrude Harrington, the sister of my host, is still a very attractive and interesting woman. The greater portion of her life has been devoted to her brother's daughters, who certainly do credit to her training. In one respect she has been only too successful: she has given them such high-toned and fastidious sentiments concerning marriage, that I believe Adèle will never find one to suit her exalted fancy. Pauline has hitherto passed unscathed, but now if I choose, I fancy she has met her master.

"To my world-hardened soul there is something deliciously fascinating in the thought of this pure, first love wreathing itself around my image, and, at moments, I could almost wish that no obstacle existed to its return. Then the frenzied passion I feel for this tantalizing being, assumes the mastery over me, sweeping every rational feeling away before it.

"Adieu, Levering. Do not think me quite demented, for I assure you that, except on this single subject, my thoughts are as clear, my mind as far-reaching and acute as ever.

"REGINALD MALCOLM."

## CHAPTER IV.

THE apartment of the sisters was on the side of the mansion opposite to the one occupied by Malcolm. The windows opened on a balcony that overhung the flower garden, from which they could enjoy the beauties of this favorite spot. Beyond the hedge which inclosed it, was a group of fine forest trees, between whose waving branches silvery gleams of the winding river could be seen. The room was large and well proportioned, with walls as white and smooth as marble, with a moulding of vine-leaves and grapes around the ceiling. In the centre was a similar circle from which was suspended a lamp of rose-colored glass, through which a soft, dreamy light was diffused throughout the apartment. The floor was covered with a delicately-tinted carpet of costly texture, and the furniture was of ebony inlaid with pearl. It had been ordered in Paris, and elegant and tasteful designs furnished by the sisters themselves. Groups of fadeless flowers glowed in every direction around the fair young beings, now in the zenith of their charms. Two large mirrors were placed where the light fell best upon them, and a few fine paintings adorned the walls. These represented pastoral scenes in Alpine countries, for the taste of the sisters led them to select what contrasted most vividly with the scenery amid which they had been reared.

Books were scattered through the room, showing that a taste for reading was not neglected, and an open portfolio contained many scraps of writing, both of poetry and prose. There might be read the thoughts, fancies, and feelings of two youthful minds which seemed to flow in unison; for nature, which had made their outward forms so unlike, had stamped a remarkable resemblance upon the spiritual being within.

Pauline's was the stronger nature, perhaps; but in all that gives a poetic coloring to youth, in the freshness of feeling, the buoyancy of temperament, and all generous emotions, they were as one. A slight variation in character had been made by the different experience of the two since they entered society. Accustomed to find herself the courted idol wherever she appeared, an indifference to the opinions of others had grown up in the mind of Adèle, when she saw that every thing was conceded to beauty alone. This, perhaps, had rendered her less sympathetic than Pauline. The heart of the latter was as a sweetly-strung lyre which responded to each skillful touch, but only now had the master-hand begun to sweep its chords.

At night, the sisters dispensed with the services of a maid, and took pleasure in performing for each other such duties as their toilette required.

Pauline sat beside the open window, with her head resting upon her hand, absorbed in a deep reverie. The rose-colored curtain was thrown back from the casement, and the blinds unclosed, to admit the bright moonlight, which lit up the vapory wreaths that began to rise from the river and settle



over the landscape. She was not thinking of the beauty of the night, though that doubtless exerted an unconscious influence upon her. Her mind was occupied by one of those idle dreams which come only to the young and the romantic : vivid—unreal—charming the soul into an imaginary Eden, which, alas ! can find no counterpart on earth ; brilliant and unsubstantial as the vapor which the god of day, for a brief season, lights up with the glory of his beams. Pauline had forgotten the presence of another, until Adèle approached and placed her hand upon the one which lay idly on her lap. She gayly said,

“ Well, sister mine, what think you of the new arrival at Wavertree ? It is Mr. Malcolm’s third visit, and your mind must be made up concerning what brings him hither.”

A faint rose tint gleamed on the fair cheek of Pauline, and a smile parted her lips. A smile of such sweet, soul-lit meaning as betrayed that the sound of that name already had power to thrill her soul with pleasurable emotions. There was a softer music than usual in her tones, as she replied,

“ I think him eminently agreeable. He was describing some of his European adventures to me this evening, and I was quite charmed with his eloquence. He possesses a keen appreciation of the beautiful and the noble, united with a perception of the ridiculous, that must render him a delightful traveling companion. Yes, I consider Mr. Malcolm a remarkable man, as well as a very handsome one.”

Adèle laughed.

“ I did not think you would be so frank. I am glad you

like him so much, for I believe he likes you, too. I watched him this evening, when his eyes fell on you, and I am sure I interpreted his glances rightly. There is something that attracts him irresistibly toward you, which he scarcely, as yet, comprehends himself; but he will—and he will learn that this is the true love: the wordless sympathy that most strongly binds souls to each other. Heigh-ho! I wish I could find some one to attract me thus mysteriously.”

Pauline's face glowed as her sister thus spoke, and the happy light in her eyes shone full upon her. She playfully said,

“For a young lady who professes to know nothing of the grand passion, you talk very learnedly upon it.”

“Ah! that is only the love of books. I have been reading of affinities, sympathies, and so forth, of late, in the hope that some such mysteries would be developed in myself: but, alas! no such miracle has taken place. I listen to the rhapsodies of my lovers as unmoved as if I were really the marble they so often compare me to.”

“Could not Malcolm move you, either? I thought at first that he admired you most.”

“Admired—oh yes, of course. He saw that I am what the world calls beautiful, and he rendered the usual homage; but admiration is not love, Pauline; and I am the last person to accept the counterfeit. Mr. Malcolm will be very highly esteemed by me as a brother, but the duplicate soul created by a higher power to blend with mine, I intuitively feel he is not. He knows this, too, for he has met his better self in you.”

"Perhaps so," replied Pauline, carelessly, as she rose, as if all interest in the discussion had suddenly ceased. "But it seems to me this is rather a premature decision, Adèle. Mr. Malcolm is as yet almost a stranger to us, so let us not discuss such a theme just yet. After all, he may only have returned thither to see our father on business, and may have no interest in either of us beyond the mere amusement of the hour."

"There speaks my aunt's prudence," replied Adèle, smiling brightly. "Well, we will drop the subject, since 't is of such perilous import. Does Mr. Malcolm remain until the birthday fête?"

"I believe so. By the way, he told me he brought you a letter from Louise."

"Yes; but, as usual, Victor appropriated it. Louise will be up on the next packet: some disappointment about her dress was all that prevented her coming on this one in company with Mr. Malcolm. Victor was quite jealous of her praises of him. By the way, I really believe our brother has given all the heart he possesses to our giddy little cousin."

"I have long known that, and from the disappointment he will inevitably meet there, the manliness of character he lacks may be developed. Wise writers have agreed that the character of a man is unformed until a disappointment in love crushes the last remnant of boyishness out of him. Such may be Victor's experience."

"You then think that Louise will jilt him?"

"Theirs was a mere childish betrothal, to which my aunt

attaches little importance. Louise likes Victor well enough, for their tastes assimilate perfectly; and our worldly-wise aunt sees a good match in my father's son; but should a wealthier suitor present himself, I am afraid poor Victor's hopes will all be dashed in fragments."

"He is tolerably safe, then; for from my father's liberality, Aunt Ruskin imagines his fortune to be exhaustless. What a life they will lead together, neither of them ever seeking one higher or more ennobling motive than the amusement of the hour."

"Let us not speak of it. Our influence over Victor amounts to nothing, and father possesses but little more. He is free to make his own choice, and we must make the best of it. Ah, if our only brother had possessed talent, high purpose, how proud of him we should have been!"

"True, Pauline; but we must love him still as dearly as when we were children together, in spite of the disappointment we have suffered in him. Do you remember how we used to sit in the shade of the old oak, and talk of the future? Then, Victor was to become either a great warrior, or a great statesman: you thought you would travel, and write a book describing all the things you saw; while I always said I would live at home, and take care of my father in his old age. I wonder if either lot will be verified. It seems, to my small experience, that what we dream of in childhood as the choice of our life, is always what is denied to our maturity. '*L'homme propose, et Dieu dispose*,' so we must submit to the will of him who doeth all things well."

"Yes," said Pauline, reverently, "our good aunt has taught

us amid prosperity, never to forget the beneficent love which has bestowed on us so much to be thankful for. It is your turn to read to-night, Adèle, and it is quite time to cease our chatter, and retire."

Adèle took from the table a volume of the Scriptures which was evidently not kept for show, alone, and slowly turned over the leaves, while the sisters composed their minds to the duty before them. She then read aloud a chapter from the New Testament, after which they knelt side by side, in prayer. When they arose, they affectionately kissed each other, and retired to the same couch of innocence and rest.

Thus had their second mother trained them, and thus they passed, unscathed, amid that world which had failed to impress its own character of frivolity upon them. In the world, but not of it, they were, for each one preserved her own pure individuality, and placed her faith and trust in a higher power, as firmly as the ascetic who holds himself aloof from all association with his fellow-sinners, fearing their evil may prove stronger against himself, than his power to influence them to good.

Why was Victor so different from these lovely sisters? His father thought that, as a boy, he must be trained by men, and so soon as he was of an age to leave the paternal roof, Mr. Harrington removed him to a northern school, where he was prepared for college. From there, the young gentleman returned home, a finished exquisite, with as small an amount of information as was possible to enable him to pass through the various grades necessary to graduate him. Known to be the only son of a wealthy and liberal father, Victor was ca-

ressed and flattered, until but one true emotion lingered in his heart, and this was his childish love for Louise Ruskin.

Mr. Ruskin, the father of Louise, was a half brother of Mr. Harrington. He had settled in New Orleans, where he accumulated an independence, as a cotton factor. He died before attaining middle age, leaving a widow with four children, of whom Louise was the eldest; to whom he bequeathed a fine residence, with an income quite insufficient to live in a style suitable to the aristocratic ideas of the family.

## CHAPTER V.

ON the following morning, Pauline, as was her usual habit, came on the front piazza, to take a view of the river, and meditate a few moments alone. She found a hammock which swung from one corner, already occupied by an earlier riser than herself; and while he remained unconscious of her presence, she paused, involuntarily, and soon forgot the purpose that had brought her thither.

Malcolm reclined in the hammock, and his eyes seemed to be following the flitting shadows made by the quivering motion of the leaves in the morning sunshine, with an interest which quite preoccupied his mind. Yet, in reality, he saw not the beauty of that bright morning. Self-absorbed, wrapt in plans in which self was most deeply interested, his subtle intellect was weaving the net-work of a scheme in which the happiness of all she loved was involved. Yet, even then, her image, with its soft, pure eyes, flitted before him, and seemed to whisper "forbear:" a warning which caused his blood to flow with accelerated speed, but checked him not one instant in his purpose.

Pauline stood motionless, gazing on that remarkable face, on which passion, intellect, and iron will were stamped in lines of power, and yet of wonderful attraction. It was impossible

to find a face of finer masculine beauty, but it was one to be appreciated only by the cultivated and intellectual. Amid the strife of the world, with man against man, its stern hardness might have revolted those of a more generous temperament; but among women, with nothing to excite his antagonism, and every motive to induce him to please, that sternness was lost in the fascinating smile he could assume, and the passionate tenderness which, at will, flashed from his large, dark eyes.

What the young girl felt, who thus gazed in silence on the placid face, which betrayed not the tide of emotions within, has been told a thousand times in ballad and in fiction, and will be read with interest as long as human hearts can feel the same humanity stirring within them.

Pauline was far from comprehending her own feelings, though they were so clearly mirrored in her face, that the worldly-wise man, as he became aware of her presence, and started from his resting-place, to offer the morning greeting, read them as clearly as if words had given them utterance; and the softness of his manner, as he approached and stood beside her, caused the blood to mantle her cheeks with an unusual glow.

What Malcolm said was common-place enough; something about the beauty of the morning, but that was of no consequence. As his expressive eyes rested upon her, Pauline felt as if suddenly permitted to have a glimpse of paradise; as if the airs of Eden were fanning her cheek, and sending their rapturous glow throughout her frame.

[ What was the source of the wonderful power this man had



so easily assumed over her? As he held her hand clasped a moment in his, she felt as if it could lead her over the world, only too happy to be forever by his side.

Pauline immediately recovered her self-possession, and led the way to a point from which the best view of the landscape could be obtained. She pointed out all its beauties to her companion, but her eloquent words were lost on him. His eyes mechanically followed her movements as she indicated her favorite points in the scene, but they returned each instant to the animated face which charmed him much more than river and woodland. At length she paused, and he said,

"It is all beautiful."

"You really think so? Well, I am glad of it, for I love every leaf and spear of grass—nay, every ripple in the old river is dear to my heart. It is my home, though, and I have known no other: it is but natural that I should love it dearly."

"Could you not then bear to leave it with one who loves you? to whose happiness you felt yourself necessary?" asked Malcolm, with his unfathomable eyes fixed upon her with an expression of earnest inquiry that made her heart tremble. Pauline did not immediately reply, and she then said, in a lower and more quiet tone,

"I have not seriously thought on that subject. It could not be the true love which would find a rival even in the beloved home of my infancy, where strife nor contentions never entered."

He seemed struck with her concluding words.

"A home without strife or contention must indeed be a paradise on earth. You will be brave, Miss Harrington, to leave it for the truest love that human heart can offer."

"Yet it seems the usual course of destiny," replied Pauline, "and I may not prove wiser than the rest of my sex."

"In that decision may be true wisdom, perhaps; for the home presided over by you must be one of peace and happiness. Lost indeed must be that man who could not feel himself nobler and happier in having such an angel ministrant beside his hearth."

There was a depth and earnestness in his tones that thrilled to her heart, and often as Pauline had listened to the language of flattery, no words ever before addressed to her had produced so sweet an illusion. They made her happier, of more importance in her own estimation than before, and she stood in silence beside him, scarcely conscious of the lapse of time.

The spell was broken by the voice of Adèle, and Malcolm turned toward her with a painful revulsion of feeling. A moment before, all had seemed at peace within him; his restless and stormier feelings lulled to magical repose by the singular power the eyes and voice of Pauline possessed over him. Now appeared the antagonistic power, and innocent as Adèle was of any intention to arouse the turbulent swell of passion in that wayward breast, such was ever the effect of her presence. But Malcolm possessed great power of self-control, and he knew that the success of his plans depended on its exertion. Until the proper moment came to avow his true wishes, Adèle should not again have cause to believe herself preferred before her sister; nay, the contrary impression

he would endeavor to make, without actually committing himself with Pauline. Her happiness was a secondary consideration with him, much as he was flattered by the preference she evinced for himself; much as he was attracted toward her, he wavered not one instant in the course he had marked out for himself. With characteristic selfishness, he rushed forward, reckless of the bleeding hearts he trampled on in his course to the gratification of his own wishes. His better nature was stifled, but his good angel veiled his face, and waited silently for the hour in which he would yearn for the power to repair evil he had so recklessly caused. Then he would learn a lesson which would last as long as life.

This morning Adèle looked so lovely in her delicate morning wrapper, and plainly braided hair, that his very spirit bowed before the incarnate ideal of beauty before him; while she smiled and talked as if unconscious of her pre-eminent attractions; yet Malcolm's manner was coldly polite, and Adèle was quite satisfied that he had indeed discovered where the true attraction lay.

In a few more moments the summons to breakfast came, and the three descended the flight of steps leading to the lower piazza on which the eating-room opened. The windows, like those above, opened to the floor, and through them was wafted the pleasant freshness of the morning air, perfumed with the odor of flowers.

Miss Harrington presided as the mistress of the mansion, and the assembled party placed themselves around the table as chance directed. Malcolm secured a seat next to Pauline, and Adèle glided into the vacant one on her father's left

hand which was generally understood to be peculiarly her own.

Mr. Harrington was in a very blithe mood this morning, and an animated conversation was carried on over the fragrant coffee. Malcolm bore his part in it so gracefully, and showed such extensive and accurate information on every subject touched on, as to surprise Mr. Harrington. Pauline listened with charmed attention, and even Adèle was interested.

Immediately after rising from the table, Malcolm requested a few moments' conversation with his host, and together they went into the library. Mr. Harrington seated himself in his usual recess beside the window, and endeavored to assume a business-like air, while Malcolm, grave and serene as the fathomless sea, placed himself on the opposite side of the table, and carelessly played with a paper-folder that lay upon it.

"Any thing new on the subject of our speculations?" asked the elder gentleman, somewhat nervously.

"I receive constant information on the subject which is of such vital importance to both of us," replied Malcolm, calmly. "There is nothing absolutely new about that to communicate: but I have something to propose which I think will interest you. If I could command fifty thousand dollars, I know of an operation by which I could with certainty treble the money in three weeks."

The spirit of the gambler was thoroughly roused in Mr. Harrington; his eyes sparkled, his cheeks glowed, as he asked,

"Are you perfectly sure of the speedy return, Malcolm, and the enormous profit?"

"I can speedily convince you, sir. I do not wish you to do any thing in the dark."

Malcolm drew from his pocket several documents which he placed upon the table. The nature of these he explained in words which were clear and convincing to the listener, and as he concluded, he said,

"My own resources are so completely tied up in other speculations, that I can not command the means to avail myself of this magnificent opening. But I thought it right to let you, a moneyed man, know how much you could gain by risking a little."

He paused, and after a few moments Mr. Harrington said, slowly,

"Fifty thousand dollars! It is a large sum. To raise it I must mortgage my whole income for two years and a half, and if the thing should fail after all, you see it would be rather an awkward predicament for an extravagant fellow like myself."

"Fail! My dear sir, there is no such word for any thing I undertake to bring to a successful conclusion. I consider this as safe as if the whole sum were already in your possession. It is absolute child's play to win in a game that is so sure. I spoke of risk certainly, but there is really none, as I could convince you, if I were at liberty to tell all I know about it. There are secrets in all crafts, you know, and I have information concerning this property, which I am certain would decide you at once. I think I may venture to tell you, as you are an interested party."

Mr. Harrington listened eagerly, as Malcolm went on in a lower tone :

“ There is a flaw in the title to this estate, which the owner has but recently discovered. Hence his anxiety to sell at only a third of its value. It so happens that I have been able to perform an important service for the only person who can rectify this. The widow of the former owner is childless, and enormously rich ; I have from her a promise, in writing, to give me a perfect title if I become the purchaser. Thus, you see, there is no chance of loss. Bought in my name, I would immediately transfer it to you.”

He watched the earnest face of Mr. Harrington, as he thus spoke, and read in its variations the effect his words produced. As he concluded, he drew the promise to which he had alluded from his pocket, and exhibited it. The paper bore the signature of an aged woman, well-known in her native State, as the inheritor of great wealth from her lately-deceased husband.

Mr. Harrington examined it attentively, and after drumming with his fingers upon the table, he suddenly said,

“ By heaven, I will do it ! The temptation is too great to be withstood. But tell me this, Malcolm ; can the property be sold immediately ? I have no desire to retain it ; the money must be replaced, for I can not bear to be cramped in my resources. It would be especially inconvenient just now, when my children have a right to the gratifications I have never denied myself.”

“ A purchaser is ready to take it off your hands at its just valuation. All that was attended to before I spoke

to you on the subject, as I anticipated some such objection."

"My dear fellow, you are a perfect trump; and what is to be your own recompense for thus serving my interests? Any percentage you may think reasonable for conducting this business, I am quite ready to allow you; for you see, without your assistance I should never have made any thing at all."

"There is a reward I may hereafter claim," said Malcolm, "but it is not a pecuniary one, my dear sir. Permit me to have the gratification of serving your interests in this instance without claiming a portion of the spoils."

"I understand you," replied his dupe, with a smile, for he believed that his own observation had fathomed the secret of Malcolm's preference for Pauline, during the matin meal, and he felt quite convinced that her hand was the prize he aimed to secure.

"And believe me, Mr. Malcolm," he added, "that I shall feel gratified to aid you by every means in my power. In the end, it shall not be the worse for you that you refuse this."

"I do not need it. My future prospects are brilliant. Assured of your consent in what so nearly concerns my happiness, I ask for nothing more. And now, dear sir, let us to business. I am sufficiently a lawyer to know what is necessary to be done, and to draw up such orders as can be negotiated by my agent in New Orleans. No time is to be lost, I assure you, in concluding this business, as a positive answer was promised before the end of the present week."

"I am at your service. I will sign whatever you may consider necessary, and my commission merchant will honor my drafts to the full amount."

Thus unsuspectingly did Mr. Harrington surrender himself into the power of a man who had the art to inspire all who approached him with a belief in his honor and integrity. Ample testimonials he had furnished of his high position, and his ability to redeem such pledges as he made. Thus far no imposition had been practiced, and when Malcolm first sought Mr. Harrington, it was with the same honorable intention which had hitherto ruled all his dealings. He had done hard things as a successful speculator, but no unprincipled ones, and until he beheld Adèle Harrington, and loved her so hopelessly, the idea of his present game had never occurred to him. To make her feel his iron grasp upon her fate; to force her to give herself to him, as the price of redemption from ruin to her idolized father, Malcolm would have risked much more. Throughout all he was scrupulous to avoid every appearance of fraud, that, end as their speculations might, his own character should remain without reproach. In the present dealing, he only intended to hold the title to the property thus purchased in his name, until his necessities forced from Mr. Harrington his consent to a union with his favorite daughter. Then their interests would be united, and henceforth his father-in-law should have no cause to complain of him.

"I wonder what Gertrude will say when she learns the result of all this?" thought Mr. Harrington, as he placed his signature to the papers offered him by Malcolm, and he



smiled at the pleasant idea of her surprise, when he should announce to her his sudden access of fortune. How he would dispose of it was already arranged in his own mind, and with agreeable visions floating before his excited fancy, he went forth amid his guests, followed by his tempter, who looked as bland, and spoke as carelessly as if no scheme beyond the amusement of the hour had ever been harbored in his subtle mind.

Two more days flowed on in the same quiet manner, during which Malcolm devoted himself to the society of the sisters, and a casual observer would have perceived no difference in his manner to either; but to them there was a slight shade of distinction quite perceptible; and hourly the conviction grew on the mind of Pauline that he loved her, and in the silent communing of her spirit, her heart overflowed with thankful happiness that to her had been granted a lot which promised such perfect content. Love with her was not the mere idle preference of a young girl, who has been taught to believe that only in early marriage can a woman find her legitimate destiny. It was the strong attachment of a responsible and thinking being for one preferred before all others; with whom she was willing to link her being throughout all time.

Could Malcolm have looked into her heart, and seen how deep, how fervent, how pure from all taint of selfishness was the affection he had won, the beauty of soul thus displayed would have eclipsed the charms that had made him a reckless invader of domestic happiness.

## CHAPTER VI.

MISS HARRINGTON was busily employed preparing for the expected fête, and was unobservant of what was passing between the three whose happiness was so deeply involved in each fleeting hour.

Guests from a distance were gathering in, and the large house was filled with company, with the exception of one room reserved for Mrs. Ruskin and her daughter. They were expected on the next packet, and Miss Gertrude resigned herself to the thought of the inquisition into her family affairs to which she knew she would be compelled to submit ; and sighed in anticipation over the lectures on her management to which she knew she would be forced to listen at least with an appearance of complacency. Mrs. Ruskin was a woman of vast importance in her own estimation at least, and fully believed that she understood the science of domestic economy better than any one else. Her sister-in-law's housekeeping was always a fruitful theme of fault-finding with her, for she had not sufficient breadth of understanding to comprehend that the system practiced in her narrow household could not be tolerated for a day in such an establishment as Harrington's. Mrs. Ruskin did not choose to comprehend this, for she was of that class of women who make

their own management the standard by which they judge that of all their friends.

She duly arrived at the appointed time, and exhibited a tall bony figure, clad in the extreme of fashion, with a length of neck which certainly emulated that of the swan, though the grace and whiteness of the latter had been withheld, as a temptation to vanity which Mrs. Ruskin did not need, possessing as she did a sufficient supply of that quality without any visible reason for indulging it.

Her face was hard and harsh in its outlines, and even in youth could have boasted little claim to beauty. She had, in spite of her want of attractions, certainly won for a husband a handsome man, with a noble and gallant spirit of his own. For the sake of peace, he permitted her to exercise unlimited sway over his house and family, and since his death, this love of managing had been frequently exercised on such of her friends as would submit to her rule.

Louise Ruskin, the eldest daughter of this unattractive mother, was a delicate graceful blonde, with a complexion as soft and rosy in its hue as that of an infant; eyes of deep azure, and a profusion of waving hair of a soft paly brown. Her motions were quick and agile as those of a playful fawn, and her vivacity was unconquerable. Even the iron rule of her mother had never been able to discipline her into subjection. She evaded her authority when it was possible to do so, and sometimes openly rebelled against it, though means were always found to punish these outbreaks when she was least anticipating it.

Mr. Harrington himself went forth to meet the exacting

widow, when the boat landed, for he was fully conscious that the omission of that courtesy would be visited by the most ungracious treatment both of himself and the guests that were within his mansion. He conducted her in formal state toward the house, expressing by the way his pleasure in welcoming her to his abode on this festive occasion.

Mrs. Ruskin acknowledged the courtesy coldly, and replied,

"I can not say that I greatly approve of such temptations to the young to pass the bounds of reason in their pleasures. The whole night will doubtless be given to revelry; but as it is Victor's birthday fête, and he is your only son, I thought it my duty to be present."

"And as he is moreover likely to become your son, before very long, it became doubly your duty, both to your daughter and yourself to attend," replied Mr. Harrington.

Mrs. Ruskin smiled grimly, as she said,

"Perhaps so—but they are very young."

She slowly ascended the staircase leading to the upper piazza, on which stood Miss Harrington and her nieces, in readiness to receive her. She took the offered hand of the elder lady, and impressing a cold kiss upon the cheeks of the two younger ones, said rather sharply,

"I really think, girls, that on an occasion like the present, you might have shown me the respect to descend into the yard, and meet me. I should then have felt that I received a warm welcome from youthful hearts that should love me for the interest I take in their welfare."

Pauline took her hand in her simple graceful manner, and said,

"Thank you, aunt, for the expression of your last sentiment, and I trust you will believe that neither of us is ungrateful for it. We thought to do you more honor by meeting you in a family group in the house. Believe me, no slight, or want of affection, influenced your reception, which I am sorry does not please you."

There was a charm in her manner, and in the truthful expression of her face, which mollified Mrs. Ruskin, she knew not why, and she said,

"I am not hurt, nor offended, Pauline, only I always think it is good to let young people know when they fail in respect to their elders. Ah! there is Mr. Malcolm"—and she advanced with her most gracious manner to speak to him.

In the mean time, Louise had detained Victor in the yard below, while she flitted among the shrubbery ostensibly gathering flowers, but really, as she whispered to him, "to give Madam Stiff an opportunity to administer the reproofs she would be sure to find occasion for."

Well as he knew her, Victor was a little shocked at this want of respect toward her mother, and he undertook to lecture her.

"I wonder, Louise, if you have a shadow of respect for any thing in this world? Does it not strike you that it is shameful to speak thus of your mother?"

"Is it now, really?" mockingly asked the little fairy. "Can you tell me now, my grave cousin, what ma has ever done to inspire me with respect? She has tormented and managed me, until I should have been perfectly crushed,

if nature had not fortunately made me of very elastic materials."

"Are you not afraid to speak thus before me, Louise?"

"Why, pray? Will you go with a shocked face, and report my naughtiness at head-quarters?"

"Not that. But then you know a rebellious daughter will not make the best wife, in all probability, and as I intend you to stand in that relation to me some of these days, I should not encourage such a spirit in you."

Louise assumed an expression of comical astonishment, as she slowly repeated:

"*You* intend! Magnificent, truly! When did you leave Turkey, most imperial sultan? Will your highness be so good as to inform me when I may expect the distinguished honor of becoming your wife? A sort of good little sheep, as Miss Bremer says."

"Nonsense, Louise; you know very well that an understanding to that effect has long existed between us, and you are nearly old enough to fulfill your pledge."

"Pledge? What pledge can a child make, Victor? I am only sixteen now, and my memory never runs back further than two years; even that seems an age, and the promise you allude to must be quite antediluvian—washed out by the sea of tears shed over my lessons since it was made. Pray don't make such an antiquity of yourself as to go back to the days when that folly was enacted."

Victor gazed on her with reproachful eyes. "I understand you, Louise, quite as well as you comprehend yourself. You are half in love with Malcolm—I gathered that from your

letter to Adèle ; you think he is rich, and you came hither to flirt with, if possible to win, him. I warn you in time, that such a game will not succeed ; Malcolm plays the lover to my sister."

" To Adèle ?" she quietly asked.

" No ; but to Pauline ; and if she has the power to win him when Adèle is near, you may be sure you have no chance."

" Pooh ! don't be jealous, Victor. I have not the least idea of running a tilt against the cold proud heart of Mr. Malcolm. Let us be friends, for you know, after all, I like you better than any one in the world. I perceive that ma has got through with her greetings, and I will skip up stairs and pay my compliments in rather a different style, I fancy."

She darted away and was half way up the staircase before Victor could gain the lower piazza. She paused, shook her finger at him, and with a radiant smile, said,

" If you would run a life-race with me, you must be more agile in your movements."

The next instant she was in the midst of the group above, and her greetings would have been almost boisterous if any thing so graceful and childlike could have been thus regarded. Like a bright-winged bird, she flitted from one to another, casting from her own gay spirit a brief sunbeam on all save her mother.

Mrs. Ruskin drew herself up with an expression of haughty surprise, and said, in grandly tragic tones,

" This violation of propriety, Louise, after all I said to you on the boat !"

"Oh, ma, I can't be pompous when I am glad to see my friends," replied the reckless romp, secure of impunity while beneath the roof of her indulgent uncle.

"Pompous! no, but proper, Miss Ruskin. Excuse her, Mr. Malcolm, her gay spirits carry her away."

"She carries her own best excuse with her, in her joyous and beautiful youth," replied he, as he bent his expressive eyes on the charming face, upturned to his with an arch coquettish smile.

"I wonder how jealous I can make Victor?" thought the little flirt, as she gave a sidelong glance to see if he had yet reached the scene of action. "Ah, if it would only reach the climax of pistols and coffee for two, how delightful it would be! I should be more talked of than any girl in New Orleans, and such a belle!"

Just then Victor appeared, and his eye singled her out immediately; but he looked provokingly tranquil. A single moment of reflection had convinced Victor that to betray jealousy of Louise was not the way to manage her—she seemed rather to enjoy it; so he would try the effect of indifference to her flirtations, and see how that would succeed.

Miss Harrington proposed to conduct Mrs. Ruskin to her apartment, and, calling to Louise to follow her, that lady moved away with most dignified bearing; but her daughter was too busily engaged prattling to Malcolm, to think of obeying the summons. He listened with amused interest to the history of her adventures on the boat, and the piquant sketches she gave of her traveling companions.



"By the way, Mr. Malcolm," she suddenly said, "one old lady said she knew you; and what do you think she said of you?"

"Something complimentary, I hope," replied he, smiling.

"Not entirely; and that was the best of it, for she did not know that we were friends of yours when she spoke of you."

"Indeed; pray let me hear this anonymous old lady's opinion of me. It must have amused you from your smiles."

"No, not exactly amusing, though I can not help laughing to think how droll it was, that she should have spoken of you before friends in such a manner. She said she had known you from a boy; that you were then the most demure little chap to be found anywhere, with more mischief plotting in your head than one would believe of a child; and she moreover added, that she did not believe you had improved much as a man."

A spot of deep red glowed in the centre of Malcolm's usually colorless cheeks, and his eyes gleamed with an expression that daunted even the reckless Louise.

She quickly added,

"There—I really believe I have made you angry."

"Oh, no," and he laughed, but a nicely-tuned ear could have detected no mirth in that laugh. "Pray go on, Miss Ruskin. I am interested in the description of my unknown friend. One likes occasionally to hear a sketch of themselves taken by a looker on. What else have you to reveal?"

"Only a piece of advice given to any young lady who might be captivated by your good looks and winning manners. Shall I repeat it?"

"By all means. I am curious to hear it."

"Then here it is. She said, 'Let every girl beware of Reginald Malcolm, for he has a will of iron and a heart of steel.'"

"Ah! I am sure I am greatly indebted to the old lady for her flattering estimate of myself, and I should be glad to hear her name."

"I asked her that, and she said it was of no consequence; you would know she had not misrepresented you, should you chance to hear what she had said."

"She intended her words to be repeated to me, then?"

"Of course—as she said all this to me."

"Louise," said a soft voice close beside her, "come with me. How can you be so inconsiderate? Do you not see that your words inflict pain?"

"I declare I never thought of that," said the giddy girl, flying back to Malcolm, for Pauline had drawn her away, as she spoke.

"I am sorry I told you this nonsense, Mr. Malcolm, for my cousin thinks I have done wrong, and she always knows so much better than I do. I did not mean any thing, I declare, and I hope you will forgive me if I have annoyed you."

Malcolm smiled composedly.

"You have not annoyed me, Miss Ruskin, for I really place no value on such idle gossip. I regret, Miss Pauline,

that you should think for a moment that it has any weight with me. A 'heart of steel' is not likely to be thus easily moved."

"No. But a noble heart of flesh feels the sting of even an idle slander," she replied, as she lifted her eyes to his. As he caught the glance, he murmured, in a low tone,

"By one generous nature, at least, I am not misjudged, and that is as much as any human being need hope for."

Pauline drew her giddy young relative away, and as Louise followed her, she mentally soliloquized,

"I really believe the stupid man is in love with her; and it is clear that she is with him. They say he will be a millionaire before many years, and 't is a shame that my rich cousin should win him, while I— Heigh ho! I believe I like Victor best, in spite of his silly talk, and his foppery; so it really makes no difference to me, only I should like to have a good flirtation with Mr. Malcolm, just to torment my true lover a little before I say the final yes, for I know ma means to marry me off before this winter is over, young as I am."

She then spoke aloud:

"I do hope, cousin, that you are not going to put me in the same room with ma."

"I am sorry that arrangement does not suit you, Louise, but the house is so crowded, we can do no better just now."

Louise pouted. "I declare that is the way my pleasure is always spoiled. Madam Stiff will lecture me half the night

for my proceedings during the day, and I shall have no peace. Preachers get bronchitis by speaking so much, and I am sure I can 't tell what keeps ma from having it. I would n't care much, if it did not kill, and would keep her at home a little more."

"I see, Louise, that you have not improved much in respect to your mother, in spite of my lectures on the subject when we were last together," said Pauline, gravely.

"You may talk, cousin ; but if you had to submit to half I endure, you would not be half as good as you are. If ma was only like Aunt Gertrude, I should not find it so difficult to be a saint."

Pauline half smiled at the idea of her own saintliness, and tapped at the door of her aunt's room. The high-toned voice of Mrs. Ruskin bade them enter, and while Louise divested herself of her shawl and bonnet, and smoothed her redundant tresses before the mirror, her mother turned her attention toward her niece. Mrs. Ruskin possessed a peculiar talent for saying unpleasant things, and after sharply examining Pauline, she remarked,

"You have not improved in your good looks since I saw you, my dear ; though they do say that the handsomest man and the best match in the market just now, has actually fallen in love with you. Is it so, child ?"

This evident allusion to Malcolm, was as repulsive to the young girl as any thing Mrs. Ruskin could have contrived to say. The deep romance of her nature, and the depth of the impression made upon her heart, rendered it almost sacrilege in her estimation for the hollow outside world to comment

on Malcolm's preference for herself — expressing surprise, perhaps, at his want of taste in preferring so plain and unpretending a person. A cloud came over her fair face, and a reply arose to her lips, but she repressed it, and Miss Harrington came to her assistance.

"The idle world gossips a great deal about affairs it really knows nothing about. Mr. Malcolm came hither on business with my brother, and there is no need to impute other motives to his visit."

"It is not true, then, after all? Well, I thought it strange that a man who had seen so much of the world, and known so many elegant women, should select Pauline for his wife. You are very well in your way, my dear," she continued, apologetically, as she saw the expression of pain on the features of her niece, "but then you always knew you were not beautiful. If it had been Adèle now, one would not have been so much surprised, for she has charms enough to make a man commit any folly."

"I am at a loss to know where the folly would be in selecting either of my nieces," retorted Miss Harrington. "In my opinion, it is they who have the best right to be fastidious."

"I am sure it is a right they have sufficiently exercised," said the provoking widow, "for if I mistake not they are both twenty. Pauline is right to lay her snares to captivate so unexceptionable a person as this distingué Malcolm. As for Adèle, she is lovely enough to attract for several years to come."

Pauline had always recoiled from Mrs. Ruskin's matter-of-fact way of saying things, but now she regarded her with

extreme disgust, in spite of her amiable efforts to excuse her rudeness.

She was glad to retreat from the room when Louise was ready to accompany her, and the latter was quite pleased to escape comment herself, at the expense of her cousin. Her mother, however, called after her, and commanded her, under pain of her severe displeasure, to bridle her tongue, and act with lady-like propriety. Louise only shrugged her shoulders, made a mocking grimace, and skipped out of hearing as soon as possible.

## CHAPTER VII.

WHILE affairs progressed thus merrily at Wavertree, a man past his first youth sat alone in a luxuriously appointed room in the city of New Orleans. His residence was situated in the French portion of the city, and the front rooms faced a narrow and nearly deserted thoroughfare. The windows on that side were, however, kept constantly closed, and the neighbors were scarcely aware that the house was tenanted. The apartments occupied by Mr. George Withers were in the rear of the building, and opened upon a spacious garden surrounded by a high hedge of orange-trees, whose unpruned branches formed a thick screen between his domicile and the prying eyes of those occupying the neighboring houses. A long sweep of smooth green turf was kept carefully free from fallen leaves; flowers were judiciously arranged in groups, and from the depth of their leafy verdure, a statue, white and pure, occasionally gleamed.

Two rooms opened on this little Eden, and they were decorated with a degree of elegance and refined taste one would scarcely have expected to find in the residence of the dark, hard-looking man who sat beside the window, robed in a dressing-gown of flowered cashmere, girt to his waist with a silken cord with heavy tassels. He seemed deeply absorbed

in some memoranda contained in a small book which he held in his hand.

Mr. Withers was rather above medium height, with a slender, wiry frame, which seemed capable of any amount of endurance. His complexion was sallow, and his eyes of that changeless, rayless black, which seem to absorb all the light and emit none, until aroused to passion, when the lurid flash which darts from them is like the sharp electric flame that consumes as it falls.

His cheek-bones were prominent, and his nose aquiline. The mouth was full and sensual: in its expression was read the love of self-indulgence, and the enjoyment of the beautiful; the retreating forehead, denoting the absence of benevolence and conscientiousness, gave a clew to the true character of the man who had appropriated to himself this little nest of loveliness.

As he muttered over the items before him, a name quite familiar to us escaped his lips more than once; finally he placed the book upon a table near him, and glancing at an ivory time-piece elaborately carved, he spoke half audibly:

"That boy lingers—Malcolm must have written by this mail, concerning the estate of Madame Roget. Ah! I only wish that chance were mine. I owe him a grudge that he lets this Harrington have it in preference to myself, and I will pay him for it yet. I had his promise to give me the first good bargain, and he has broken it. Beware, Master Malcolm, or you will find yourself checkmated by your tool some of these days. Only let a good chance come to me, and I will grasp it, let the results be what they may. Here am I



at thirty-eight, still working, still scheming, without any tangible reward. Why is fortune so unjust to me, when she pours wealth so prodigally into the coffers of Malcolm?"

The current of his thought was interrupted by the cautious opening of a small gate in full view from the spot on which he sat, and the look of care and hardness seemed to vanish; his face wore an expression that was almost tender as he recognized the slight figure which came quietly in, and carefully closed the entrance behind her. This was a child who had seen twelve summers perhaps; she was clad in a dark gray silk, with a crimson scarf tied around her throat, the long ends hanging down in front, and a small hood of the same color upon her head.

She walked quietly and gravely forward, as if afraid of disturbing him she came to seek. The girl was not pretty, and it was not difficult to decide the relationship existing between herself and the person who awaited her coming, commenting in his own mind on her appearance, and her demure demeanor. She was very brown, and no bloom relieved the sallowness of her complexion, yet her features were well proportioned, and her mouth and eyes most expressive. The latter were large, dark, and of a clear hazel; they, with the open and well defined brow, the delicately curved lips, were unlike those of her father, and redeemed her face from utter homeliness.

The child saw that she was observed, but she did not quicken her steps on that account. With a quiet diffident grace she came into the room and stood beside him who had watched every motion, and comprehended what was passing

in her young mind. Withers took the hand which was not extended to him, and kindly said,

"Grace left me in anger yesterday. Is she in a better humor to-day?"

Then a deep blush burned on the brown cheek, and she quickly and earnestly said,

"No, no, not in anger, father. I could not presume to feel that against you. I was only hurt. You refused me what I thought you could grant, and—and—"

She paused, and seemed resolutely to repress some painful emotion.

"And I was harsh. Yes; I was busy, and annoyed, and I said what I was sorry for afterward. Forget it, child, and I will be more forbearing in future. But there is one thing I wish you to understand, Grace; I am no millionaire; so do not torment me by asking such indulgences as I can not afford."

The child glanced sidly around, as if taking note of the costly fitting up of the apartment in which they stood, and she meekly replied,

"I know it is wrong to tease you, but I so much desire to learn drawing; and mademoiselle says I have a talent for it; as she would have less trouble in teaching me, she offers to give me lessons at a lower price than the rest of the class. I came to let you know this; I hope you will not be angry with me for speaking of it again."

Her father drew her toward him, and caressed her. It was very rare that he exhibited any fondness for her, and the child received these tokens of affection very shyly, as if un-

certain that at any moment she might not unwittingly give offense. Her father at length said,

"Well, you are a poor little brown puss, and an accomplished education is all that can ever bring you out. I suppose you must have it, cost what it will. You may learn to draw, but tell that French madame that I choose to pay the full price. No one shall say that my daughter owed a portion of her education to charity. Hold up your head, child, among the best, for I intend to make you rich yet."

An expression of intense happiness irradiated the features of the girl, rendering them attractive in spite of their homeliness. The concluding words of her father had been unheeded, and she clasped him around the neck, as she exclaimed,

"I may indeed learn to draw! Dear, good father. Mademoiselle says I may become a great painter. I have, without instruction, drawn several heads. One of you, which is so like you. I drew it from memory, and, and—here it is, father."

She drew from the pocket of her dress a small dingy square of drawing board, on which she had traced the harsh outlines of her father's features; she had rubbed them out many times before she satisfied herself that the expression was correct; and the result of her want of skill was, that a gray-looking ogre, with the high nose and fierce eyes of Mr. Withers, looked out from the background. She presented this specimen of her talent with trembling eagerness, hoping it would make a favorable impression. To her mortification Withers started back, and exclaimed,

"That like me? Why, child, do I seem such a monster to you? Poor little Grace, I do not wonder that she often trembles when she comes near me, if I resemble that black-looking fellow."

Grace burst into tears; she sobbed,

"I—I thought it like. It is not ugly to me, father. Indeed, indeed mademoiselle thought it a good beginning."

"Pooh! nonsense! She only flattered you to get another pupil. But you may learn, if it is only to prevent you from caricaturing me in such a manner. There, burn it, and say no more about it."

He made a motion as if he would take it from her, and throw it in the fire, but she eagerly clasped it to her breast, and pleaded,

"Pray let me keep it until I can do better; I like it, I value it. I will promise to tell no one who it is."

Her father half smiled.

"On those terms I consent."

Grace, glad of this permission, hurriedly concealed her treasure, thoroughly mortified and disheartened at the unflattering comments it had elicited.

After a pause, Mr. Withers asked,

"Did Madame S—— send her bill?"

The child drew forth a neatly-folded paper, and gave it to him. He looked over the various items, frowned, bit his lips, and as he glanced at the total he said,

"Madame's charges are extortionate. You cost me almost a small fortune every year, young as you are; and yet you

still ask to add to the list of your accomplishments. It is not reasonable."

"I will give up music then, father," said the low, deprecating voice. "That is not my talent. I shall never become a fine performer."

"Do n't provoke me, child. Music is of more importance in society than all the drawing and languages a girl can learn. You shall excel in it; and I shall tell Madame S—— to double your practice, unless you promise me that you will use every effort to become a skillful performer."

"I will try to please you, father," was the subdued reply.

"Really; well, I will not withdraw my promise about the drawing lessons, since you promise so fairly."

The downcast face brightened. Withers added,

"I believe I can't stand this much longer. I will take you to France next year, where you can be educated at a mere tithe of the expense bestowed upon you here."

"To France!" and Grace's eyes grew larger and brighter. "How charming that will be! But will you really take me, father?"

"If my affairs prosper as I hope they will, I shall certainly do so. But here comes John. Leave me now, and tell Madame S—— I will call and settle with her to-morrow."

He carelessly held out his hand, and the child timidly touched it with her own, before gliding quietly out, and threading her way toward the entrance by which she had gained admission. Could that young heart have been looked into, there might have been read deep tenderness repressed—the yearning desire to be loved, which only the motherless

child can know in all its bitterness. A tear stole silently down her colorless cheek, but it was soon wiped away. Pride of character gave her strength beyond her years, and she would not weep, though her father's words had deeply wounded her. She came back to Madame S——'s school with the same composed reserve of character which always distinguished her, and with respectful gravity delivered the message with which she was charged.

In the mean time his messenger entered the apartment of Mr. Withers, and laid a package of papers and letters before him. He dismissed the boy, and then eagerly looked over the letters: one was speedily singled out, which he recognized as coming from Malcolm. Tearing open the envelop, he threw it on the floor, and rapidly read the few lines addressed to himself. They simply gave brief directions in reference to what was to be done with the inclosed papers. Withers glanced over them, and an expression of miserly greed came upon his unattractive face. He vehemently exclaimed,

"Fifty thousand dollars! That sum in my power? Oh, blind Fortune, do you take the guise of a money-fiend to tempt me to evil?"

With absorbing interest he read the papers over. Inclosed was an order for the sum named, on one of the wealthiest firms in New Orleans; and a mortgage on the plantation of Wavertree, duly signed and witnessed, to secure the commission merchant in case he should hesitate to advance so large a sum of money. With this money Withers was immediately to close the purchase of the estate offered at a great sacrifice by M. Delolme.

The astute man of business read and pondered, and his rayless eyes seemed to have a deeper meaning in them than ever. He again muttered, "Fifty thousand dollars! It is a large sum. In a foreign land, one could live like a prince on that. It is a great chance: I doubt if I shall ever have another half so good. Malcolm always promises to advance my interests, but he finds me too useful to assist me to become independent of him. I begin to feel that I have played the drudge too long, and it is time that I look after my own interests."

He again read the letter, and walked up and down the room—thinking, resolving, planning. He courted temptation; he made no effort to fly from it, and before the morning had half elapsed, his mind was quite fixed on the extensive fraud he meditated. He knew that Malcolm had implicit reliance on his integrity—for he had been scrupulous never to give him the slightest cause of suspicion in their numerous dealings with each other. It had been necessary to establish this confidence, that the power to acquire wealth by one bold stroke should be afforded him. He had waited and watched for the hour of fruition, and now it had arrived. Never again could he hope for so brilliant an opportunity of securing fortune by one bold stroke. He thought not of the ruined man and his helpless family, hurled from their hospitable home into the abyss of poverty. He laughed sardonically, as he said,

"By this stroke I shall also serve Malcolm, and save him much finessing. He wishes for power over the fate of that cold beauty, the daughter, and what can plead more power-

fully in his favor than her dainty luxuriousness reduced to labor for her bread, or accept the wealth he offers together with his hand. . Ha! I fancy that story will soon be told, and a new leaf in his destiny unfolded. That man has great luck—I wonder why it should be so? Why Fate gives to some men every thing, and to others a stone?"

Suddenly it occurred to him that this was no time to moralize. The moments were passing, and he must, without delay, call on Messrs. Hall & Co. with his vouchers, and demand the large sum they were required to advance. With great care he completed his toilette, for he was a man extremely attentive to appearances; then fastening his rooms, he went out by the private entrance through which his daughter had passed. He had to walk a great distance, and his way lay through much of the busiest portion of New Orleans. He received and returned many friendly greetings, for Withers was a man well known in the speculating world which comprises so many acute intellects in every large city.

The counting-house of Messrs. Hall & Co. was at length gained, and with an air of confidence he succeeded in penetrating into the sanctum of the head of the establishment. This was a small dark-looking room, in which was a gray-haired man, somewhat advanced in life, busily engaged in writing. This was the senior partner of the firm, and after nodding to Withers, he completed the sentence he was engaged on, before turning toward him. Then he whirled nervously around, and said quickly,

"Can I do any thing for you this morning, Mr. Withers?"

"A great deal," was the prompt reply; "as these papers



will show you," and he drew forth a letter from Mr. Harrington, which had accompanied that of Malcolm. It was addressed to the merchant, explaining the business to him. As Withers placed it before him, he half smiled, and said,

"You do business after my own mind, Mr. Withers. There is no preamble which tends to nothing, no loss of time in mere words."

Withers bowed as he replied,

"Your own promptness is so well known, that I only seek to fall into the habit of your mind, my dear sir."

The merchant had evidently not listened to him. His eyes were fastened on the paper before him, and his brows knit as he read and re-read its contents. He then laid it on the desk and, after a moment's thought, said,

"Mr. Harrington makes a large demand on us, and at short notice."

"The security is good," quietly responded Withers, with a motion toward the mortgage.

"Undoubtedly; Wavertree is a fine plantation, and the owner of it a man of honor, but he already has many liabilities against him. Mr. Harrington is extravagant, and—"

He paused, and seemed unwilling to utter what was passing in his mind. The heart of Withers began to beat painfully, as the possibility presented itself that his golden visions might vanish before the obstinacy of this man. He felt the blood rushing with electric speed through his frame, and the veins on his broad forehead swelled almost to burst—

ing. Setting his teeth firmly, and clenching his hands, he resolutely summoned back his calmness. Only by superior craft could he accomplish the end he was now fully resolved to achieve. When he thought the opportunity about to escape him, all his lingering scruples vanished; he must secure this money—must appropriate it at all hazards. He presently spoke in a quiet, even-toned voice.

“I can assure you, Mr. Hall, that the money will be perfectly safe. You are aware that I am engaged in extensive speculations in which others are also deeply concerned. I can not betray the exact nature of the present one, but I can assure you, on the faith of an experienced calculator of chances, that Mr. Harrington will be in a position to refund the money in less than a month.”

The merchant regarded him with a penetrating glance.

“Your judgment is usually considered excellent I know in the kind of business to which you have devoted your energies, Mr. Withers; yet I still hesitate. We have already a considerable balance against Harrington, and should he fail in this speculation, for such I understand it to be from your words, he would be inextricably involved. Ruin would overtake a family that has never known a privation. We could not afford to suffer so large a sum to lie idle, and—you know of course what must follow.”

“But I tell you this is as certain as if I held the proceeds in my hand. It is only buying a magnificent estate at a mere nominal value, and selling it immediately to another who will pay down as much as you are requested to advance.

Thus you see, the use of the money will only be required for a few weeks."

"If that were certain," replied the cautious man of business. "But—pardon me—an idea occurs to me. Is the estate in question the one offered by Mr. Delolme?"

"I believe I may lay aside my usual discretion so far as to reply in the affirmative."

"Are you, who usually know every thing in that line, not aware that the title to that property is defective? and that is the true reason why it is offered so much below its real value."

Withers smiled knowingly.

"Mr. Harrington is fully informed on that subject. He has ample security from Madame Roget for a good title, hence his desire to purchase the estate in question."

This statement had a visible effect: the face of the merchant cleared up, and he at once said,

"That materially alters the case, and Harrington seems as fortunate in his maturity as he was in his youth. I can now see my way clear, and no longer hesitate. But you are perfectly certain that the title will be perfected, Mr. Withers?"

"Perfectly. It will be done before the money is paid."

"So much the better. Harrington is a fine, noble-hearted fellow, and I know of no man who more liberally uses his good fortune. I will consult a few moments with the junior member of the firm, and then inform you of our decision. You will find the morning paper in the next room. I have not yet found time to glance at any thing in it, except

the state of the market. We have an unusual press of business just now, and I am employed until late in the afternoon."

Withers bowed, and retired to the apartment occupied by the clerks, one of whom summoned the junior partner to a conference with the chief of this little world in itself. A bland smile, and a courteous bow greeted him from the junior as he passed him on his way to the inner shrine of Mammon; and Withers knew that from him he had not much opposition to fear. He was not the financiering partner, and seldom ventured to oppose the fiat of his senior.

Withers took the morning paper which was offered him by one of the young men, and glanced over it. The recent land sales and the advertisements for new ones were carefully conned; then he glanced over the other items. By some chance his eyes were directed toward the dark lines that usually surround the column of deaths. He rarely glanced at them, for they reminded him of a disagreeable necessity there must be at some future day, for relinquishing all the enjoyments of existence, and appearing where an account would be required of the talent committed to his charge. But a name fascinated his eye to the page. The announcement ran thus—

"Died, suddenly, on her plantation on Bayou Lafourche, Madame Annette Roget, relict of the late Pierre Roget."

For an instant the heart of the reader ceased to throb, and he seemed suffocating. With a furtive glance around to see if his emotion was observed, he arose, and crushed the paper into his pocket.

A few moments afterward he was summoned into the

sanctum, and by the time he entered it, his inscrutable face had resumed its usual expression. The elder partner said,

"We have decided to make the required advance, Mr. Withers. Is it imperative that the money shall be paid over to-day?"

"My orders are positive to close the trade immediately, and I have an appointment this afternoon to meet the lawyer of M. Delolme, and make a final settlement."

"In that case, be kind enough to wait a few moments, and I will send one of the clerks round to the bank with you."

With an unquiet heart, Withers sat down while Mr. Hall drew the order for the sum he so ardently coveted. He turned once, and laconically said,

"In gold, I suppose?"

"Certainly—gold will be most convenient."

The order was completed, and handed to him; with stifled exultation he received it, and his eyes gloated on each separate word as they ran over them. He felt his form dilating with a consciousness of power. A few more hours, and all this would be his.

He bade adieu to Mr. Hall and, accompanied by the clerk, left the house. Together they entered the bank—the order was carefully examined, found genuine, and duly honored. There was no delay in counting the money, for it was already put up in bags of five thousand dollars each, and ten of these were soon transferred to him.

A cab was called, and loaded with the precious deposit; Mr. Withers then jumped in and gave the direction to his retired abode.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE cab was driven to the front entrance, where the boy who acted as his messenger was lounging on the sidewalk. Assisted by him, the bags of coin were safely transferred to the sitting-room of Withers. As he resumed his reins, after receiving his fare, the cabman said,

"I guess there 's a fortin' in them ere bags?"

"Not a very large one—silver weighs heavy," replied Withers. "But, small as the sum is, I shall pay it away this afternoon, for I make it a rule never to keep money about me in a city like this."

The man nodded, but looked as if he had his own opinion on that subject. He drove on a few paces, then stopped and looked back, to see if Withers had disappeared. He had gone in, and the door was closed. The cabman arose from his seat and took a deliberate survey of the house and its surroundings. He muttered,

"Silver, indeed! Guess I knows better 'n that. *I* knows how gold is did up in them ere banks, and there was a cool fifty thousand shiners in them bags. It's a lonesome place, and something might be done there without the neighbors being any the wiser for it. It's worth thinking of, any way. You'll pay it away old file will you, afore night? I know what that's

worth. Maybe you'll part with it afore day, but not with your own consent, that's certain."

Thus half soliloquizing, he drove slowly away absorbed in his scheme of plunder, as deeply as was the villian of a higher grade, who placed the money upon his table, dismissed the boy, and composedly sat down before it to calculate all the chances in favor of his escape with his booty. With the skill of a cool head he argued in his own mind the two sides of the question merely as a matter of policy—conscience and justice had no voice in the decision.

Should he abscond with his prize, and, under a feigned name, enjoy all the pleasures it could purchase? or should he devote ten more years to the honest acquisition of a fortune, which, in that time, would probably exceed the sum before him? Ay, if fortune smiled on him. If?—there was the doubt. Toward him the favors of the blind goddess had fluctuated, and what he gained in one successful hit, was often swept away in his next venture. His calling was but a more exciting species of gambling, in which he could not always control the chances. Finally, the choice seemed so nearly balanced, that in the true spirit of the gambler, he resolved to leave it to the chances of the dice. He drew forth a box, and after shaking them furiously, he threw them on the table. "I will take three throws," he muttered, "and if they go over thirty-eight, my own age, I take the present chance and leave my fatherland forever." The word fatherland caused a sneer to stamp itself upon his features, and it was with this expression that he stood where a streak of sunshine fell through the half-closed window-blind upon

him, revealing all the ugliness of his brown, iron-looking face.

"Eighteen, by Jupiter!" he exclaimed. "The evil demon has the ascendancy just now, I am sure. Let me try again."

Again the dice rattles upon the wood.

"Ace, four," he muttered discontentedly. "Hem! the good angel, I suppose, is taking his turn now, and of course he gives me the lowest mark on the dice. It has always been my luck."

He rattled the pieces of ivory energetically, and after a pause, during which he grew perceptibly paler, he threw them with a hand tremulous from anxiety. He glared at the numbers, as if they, indeed, revealed the decree of Fate, and fell utterly unnerved upon his seat.

Yes—if upon that throw hung honor, integrity, and the welfare of others, he had indeed lost, for seventeen made the number greater than the one he had named as the maximum. A cold perspiration bedewed his brow, and for a few seconds a confused whirl was in his brain. His self-possession was however speedily restored by a loud knocking at the outer door.

He hurriedly threw his cloak over the table to conceal the bags of treasure, and went with slow steps to admit the impatient applicant, who was again making the house resound with his sonorous rappings.

"How often have I told you, Bondy, never to come to this entrance?" Withers peevishly inquired, as he recognized the person who entered. "Can you not let yourself in at the garden-gate, without all this uproar?"



"Maybe I could, if I was a witch or a spirit," was the response, made in a sharp voice which proceeded from a man near his own size, with a shrewd Jewish physiognomy. He was elaborately dressed, and had the air of a third-rate man of fashion. "The deuce! Do you expect a fellow to creep through the key-hole? for the gate was securely fastened."

"I had forgotten I went out by that way myself this morning, and took the key with me. On my return, I entered by this door. Excuse me—you interrupted me in a deep calculation, and I was annoyed."

"O, I never expect manners from a bear, and you can be the best representative of one that I have had the good fortune to meet," carelessly responded the young man, as he entered the apartment occupied by Withers, and threw himself upon a seat.

"You are disposed to be complimentary," said Withers, with sarcastic emphasis.

"Not at all—I always pique myself on speaking the plain truth."

"That your manners and appearance may be in keeping, I suppose," retorted the other, for he knew that his visitor was peculiarly sensitive on the score of his want of beauty. Bondy only scowled in reply, and sat impatiently tapping his boot with a fancy cane he held in his hand.

After a pause Withers said,

"It may seem inhospitable, but I am extremely busy to-day, Bondy, and if you have only made a friendly call, I must dispense with the civility till some other time."

"Polite," sneered the Jew; "but suppose I came on business."

"In that case, be so good as to state it as briefly as possible."

"I am quite willing; for you can not be more anxious to get rid of me than I am to be gone. I came to know if the purchase of Delolme's place has been completed by you?"

"Of what interest can that be to you?" inquired Withers, fixing his most sinister gaze upon him.

"Only this; I thought your employers would not thank you for your precipitation, as Madame Roget is dead, and I know the next heir is ready to dispute the title. I came to give you this information, thinking it might be useful to you; but it is small thanks one need expect from *you* for any service."

"My dear Bondy, I am really obliged to you for the intended kindness," said Withers, with assumed frankness. "To tell you the truth, I have just seen the announcement of her death in the morning paper, and it was that which made me so out of humor, when you came in. The old lady could not have been guilty of a more inconvenient or ill-bred thing than to die just at this crisis; she has spoiled one of the best trades I ever made, and I lose commissions that would have made me much better off than I now am."

"What will you then do with the large sum you drew from the bank this morning?" asked Bondy, carelessly.

Withers started and knit his heavy brows. He slowly repeated,

"The money—true—that is another inconvenience ; but how did you know I had it ?"

"Oh, I saw you on the way to the bank ; I know the clerk who was with you, and when I accidentally met him afterward, he told me that you had drawn fifty thousand dollars to pay Delolme. I had seen the announcement of Madame Roget's death, and I came to warn you."

"Thank you. I appreciate your motive ; but what I am to do with this large sum is a puzzle. Business hours at the banks will be over before I could deposit it again, and by the time I could return to Messrs. Hall & Co., the principals will both have left for their own homes."

"True ; but you could have the money placed in their safe for security."

"I could ; but then the clerks only would be responsible for it. Safes have proved very unsafe in many instances, and this is a large sum, a great temptation."

He uttered the last words with such emphasis that Bondy looked at him curiously. He abruptly asked,

"Is it one to you ?"

Withers winced, for this was a home-thrust. He passionately said, while his dark face flushed deeply,

"Did you come hither to insult me ? Am I a man to sacrifice my integrity for even a sum like this ? I, who have had thousands to pass through my hands, and never yet had an insinuation breathed against my honesty."

"Pooh ! you take it too seriously. I intended no insult," replied Bondy, coolly. "If you take it up thus, I shall begin

to think that you really meditate some treachery with regard to this money."

"I care very little what you think," responded Withers, angrily, and if you can say nothing more agreeable to me, I wish you would leave me to complete the business I before told you presses heavily upon me. But for services rendered me in the past, I should know how to resent the insinuations you have had the hardihood to make."

"Oh, as to that, I only said what I did to vex you. Anger makes your hard, brown face look so infernal, that you are even uglier than I am. Ha! ha! you are quite a picture now, and would figure finely among the goblins in a certain place you wot of."

Withers made a furious gesture toward him, but Bondy arose, bowed to him with an air of mock respect, and left the room, closing the door as he went out.

Drawing a long breath, the angry man stepped quickly after him, and was about to turn the key in the lock, when it was suddenly opened again, and Bondy's face came almost in contact with his own, as he thrust his head forward,

"Just looked in; hope I don't intrude," he said, twisting his face into a ridiculous imitation of Paul Pry. "I forgot to mention the chief business that brought me here. A gentleman of my acquaintance has seen this place once when he called to visit you on business, and he wishes to know if you will give it up on any terms?"

"The place is not mine. I have only a lease, which I would be glad to get rid of. Rooms nearer the centre of

business would suit me better, and I shall be very glad to let him have it. Who wants it?"

"A young man who is about to be married. He thinks a romantic solitude, like this, will be pleasant for his honeymoon; and he is quite willing to pay you for any inconvenience he may put you to."

Withers affected to hesitate a moment, though nothing could have better suited his plans. He asked,

"Will he pay cash?"

"Certainly, and to-day, if required."

"That will suit me very well, as I have a bill to make up by to-morrow, which I intended to borrow money to meet. This will obviate that necessity, and for a few weeks I can take boarding at a hotel, until I can look around, and find lodgings for myself."

"Good! It is a bargain, then. How much, and when must he pay?"

Withers glanced around at the luxurious adornments, and made a rapid calculation in his mind. He then said,

"A thousand dollars paid at six o'clock this evening, and your friend can have possession to-morrow."

"You shall have it at that hour; good-morning." And this time he actually went. Withers threw him the key of the garden gate, and requested him to let himself out. As Bondy slowly wended his way through the shaded walks, he pondered on the recent interview; and to his suspicious nature the conduct of Withers seemed very strange. He muttered,

"I do believe something is wrong about that money. Withers must feel very confident of his means of defense to

keep so large a sum as that in so retired a place. I don't believe he means to do the right thing by the owner, but I'll think twice before I agree to that cabman's proposal."

The gate closed on him, and Withers, who had eargerly watched every step he made, rushed out and rapidly threaded his way to the portal which he securely locked, and carried away the key with him. On his return, he opened a closet concealed in the wall, and after a few minutes' search, drew forth an empty chest strongly made, into which he hurriedly packed the gold, and fastened it up. He then looked over the newspaper which he had abstracted in the morning, to see what ships would leave port that day.

One bound for France he wished to find, and there was exactly what suited him. The bark *Euterpe* would leave certainly on the following morning at six o'clock for Havre. His dinner-hour was approaching, and he concealed the box in the closet and impatiently awaited the return of the boy who usually brought him his meals from a neighboring restaurant.

In the mean time he wrote two notes—one was to the lawyer of M. Delolme declining the proposed purchase, since the only person who could have made a legal title to the property was dead. The other was to Madame S—— requesting her to permit his daughter to come to him at four o'clock and bring with her a change of clothing, and such other articles as she might need in a visit to a friend in the country, to whose residence he intended taking her the same afternoon.

They were scarcely finished, when the boy came in with a recherché little dinner, which Withers ordered in person every

morning, for he was a connoisseur in good living, lean and sinewy as he looked. While he discussed the deliciously flavored viands, he despatched the boy on his errands, telling him to call first at Madame S——'s and as he returned from the lawyer's office to stop again at the academy, and bring his daughter and her packages with him.

Withers was more abstemious than usual in the indulgence of his appetite, for he wished to keep his brain clear for what remained before him.

The interval between the departure of the lad, and the arrival of his daughter was spent in looking over the account of all his worldly possessions. There was strong evidence among them to prove that the step he was about to take was not the effect of sudden temptation—that it had long been prepared for, although vaguely, and as a possible rather than a probable event. All the property he had realized amounted to nearly ten thousand dollars, and it was invested in foreign securities in the assumed name of Charles Hamilton. Thus he was prepared at any moment, when a temptation of sufficient magnitude was offered, to avail himself of his perfect readiness to abscond at any moment.

And this man, stained with guilt, as he was about to become, had a child, young and pure, who was to become the companion of his flight. He loved her, too, in his own way, though there was little tenderness in his affection for her. It was merely the instinctive attachment which nature implants in the breast of the meanest of her offspring for their own. Grace also recalled to her father the one green spot upon his hard pathway, in which self-interest had not been his

guiding motive. Withers had never been romantic, but by some strange chance, he had really fallen in love with an interesting girl who possessed no fortune, and had married her. She did not live long enough after their union for him to grow weary of her, and the clear eyes and gentle manners of his daughter, often recalled the image of her who had been much fairer and more attractive than her descendant.

The boy at length returned, accompanied by Grace, who was dressed exactly as on her visit in the early part of the day. Her face wore a brighter expression in the anticipation of some change in her monotonous life, and her greeting to her father was less timid than usual.

"Shall we indeed go into the country, dear father? and see the beautiful flowers, and bright sunshine away from crowded brick walls? Ah that will indeed be charming!" and she gayly clapped her hands.

Mr. Withers was surprised at this outburst, so different from her usual quietness. He laughed as he said,

"O, you will have a thousand wonders to relate to Madame S—— when you return. But pray moderate your raptures a little, and assist me in packing my trunk."

"You will take a trunk then, father? We must be going to make quite a visit."

"Only a small trunk, child. Put in a change of clothing for me, and then lay your own things above them, in good order."

Quiet and orderly in her habits, Grace had soon completed her task, and by that time a carriage, for which the boy had been despatched, stood before the door. The chest of treas-



ure was transferred to it—the trunk fastened on, and, giving the lad strict orders to remain at home until his return, Mr. Withers and his daughter were rapidly driven to a ship landing at the lower end of the city.

The *Euterpe* had already received her freight, and hauled out in the stream, ready to leave on the following morning. The water was calm, and in a few moments the father and daughter stood in safety upon her deck. The captain, a bluff Scotchman, received them politely, and to him Mr. Withers briefly communicated his desire to engage a passage on his vessel for himself and the child that accompanied him.

The old man looked kindly at Grace, as he asked,

“And will the lassie have no woman with her?”

“No—she is not dainty, and can take care of herself. Her mother is dead.”

“Poor bairn—more’s the pity for her. Well sir, we have but one passenger, and that happens to be a lady who has taken the whole of the cabin. If she will let your daughter have a berth, I can accommodate you.”

While he spoke, a delicate, middle-aged woman, dressed in deep mourning, emerged from the cabin. Her eye at once fell on Grace, and she seemed attracted by the young face, and shy manner, for she faintly smiled on her as she passed the group. The captain arrested her steps without ceremony, and said,

“Madame, this gentleman wishes to take passage with me for himself and this little girl: but I was just telling him that unless you would give the child a berth in your cabin, there is no chance to accommodate him.”

The lady paused, but she scarcely listened to the words of Mr. Withers, who made an elaborate speech, setting forth his earnest desire to obtain a passage on the *Euterpe*, and the great obligation he should feel under to her, if she would give a nook in her cabin to his daughter.

The lady gently took the hand of the frightened and confused girl, and said,

"Your daughter, sir, looks like a child of refined manners, and amiable temper, and her companionship will be a welcome relief to the tedium of a sea voyage, which I had not hoped for. I love children, and can interest myself with them, when the society of their elders would jar upon my feelings. I accept her willingly as the companion of my voyage."

Grace clung to the hand which lightly and softly held hers, but with a touch so friendly—so mother-like, that she instinctively felt she had gained a friend, in the sorrowful-looking being beside her.

Mr. Withers would have thanked her, but she impatiently waved her hand, saying,

"Enough, sir; we understand each other. From this moment, I consider your daughter under my charge."

She drew Grace unresistingly toward her, and together they entered the cabin.

On their way to the ship, Mr. Withers had explained to his daughter that they would not visit the country, but embark at once for Europe. He told her the tale he had already prepared for her; that he had inherited a fortune from a distant relative in England; which he would visit that country

and claim, so soon as he had placed her at school in France, where he intended her to complete her education. The will of the testator provided that he should assume his name, and as Charles Hamilton he should register himself upon the ship's book.

As he disliked to answer questions, he forbade Grace, under penalty of his severe displeasure, to reveal to any one the fact that she had ever borne any other name; and as he parted from her he found means to whisper a caution not to betray this vital secret to her new friend.

Having placed his daughter and his gold in safety, Withers selected a berth, and then left the ship, with the assurance to the captain that he would be on board by daylight. The further arrangements he had to make compelled him to return again to the city.

## CHAPTER IX.

WITHERS regained his own residence just at twilight, and found the boy he had left in charge of the house, sleeping soundly on the floor of his sitting-room. He let himself in by the private entrance, and after some effort, succeeded in arousing the young somnambulist sufficiently to send him away to his mother's for the remainder of the night.

In a few moments more he expected Bondy to arrive, and after the transaction of the business he came on, he would have a few hours in which to seek rest for his harassed mind and wearied body. Now he sat in the dim twilight, with his head supported on his hand, thinking over the past days of toil and drudgery, and trying to imagine how brilliant would be the life of pleasure he intended to lead, in that old world he had so long desired to visit.

But, spite of his efforts to conceal the fact from himself, a feeling deeper than weariness fell with leaden power upon him. He did not regret leaving the spot so long his home; he would have sneered had such a thought occurred to him. As he thus sat in the dim room, all the events in his monotonous life passed in review before him, and he felt the conviction in his own mind that he had never yet really lived. This existence of calculation and plodding business was not life. What then was?

Ah, how different would be the reply of each human being to that question. That of Withers was, to enjoy—to live luxuriously—to gratify every caprice—and then? Beyond that, he cared not—his was the creed of the worldly-wise man, who lives only in the present, and suffers the future to take care of itself. Why should he look into that dim, dim uncertainty beyond, so long as he could avoid it?

As he thus sat, he must have slept, for a vision, clad in floating garments, seemed to hover beside him, and luminous rays appeared to emanate from the sweetly-sorrowful face that bent toward him. Shadowy fingers parted the hair upon his brow, and their touch diffused a delicious sense of repose throughout his aching brain. A low voice thrilled through his soul, and the words that came to him were those of warning and entreaty :

“My beloved, go back upon your perilous path. Do not this wrong thing; bring back our child as your best safeguard from evil. She will protect you, if you respect her innocence;” and as he remained impassive, a long wail of woe seemed breathed into the tones of entreaty.

A loud rap upon the window startled him, and he aroused himself from the light slumber that, for a few brief moments, had enchained his faculties. The impression of his dream was still upon him, but he cast it aside with an impatient exclamation, and admitted Bondy.

“What! All in the dark, and no fire, this chilly evening,” he exclaimed, as he entered. “Why, man, what are you dreaming about?”

“An angel, I believe,” replied Withers, lightly; “for only

a moment since I could have sworn that one was beside me. At the approach of an evil spirit, she vanished, of course."

"Undoubtedly," coldly replied the other. "But as I am the bearer of money to you, I should scarcely be considered a spirit of evil. Thus, you see, your desire to say a rude thing to me has caused you to utter a falsehood almost in the presence of your angel visitant."

"Nonsense—let us to business at once, for I have no time to spare. You have brought the money?"

"Certainly—and this paper for you to sign. Mr. Somers would have come himself, but he had an engagement with his betrothed, and made me his agent."

Withers lighted a lamp, and examined the paper—he then carefully counted over the money, and after securing it in his pocket-book, signed the agreement, expressing the hope that the purchaser would be as well satisfied with his bargain as he was.

"He is more than contented," said Bondy. "He is charmed to be able to secure so lovely a seclusion in the heart of a city like this. But let us not talk of him. What have you done with the money for the Roget place? Did you finally take my advice, and deposit it with Messrs Hall, until to-morrow?"

"No—not with them, but in quite as secure a place," briefly responded Withers.

"Ah, I see that you do not choose to answer me; but I only asked, that in case you have risked keeping it here, I might offer to remain with you to-night."

"Thank you, but I believe I shall not need your services. The money is quite safe; I do not apprehend any danger to it; and if I did, I believe I am quite competent to take good care of it myself."

"This is a lonely, out of the way place."

"Yes—but I am well armed, and a resolute man," replied Withers, who took pleasure in baffling the evident desire of Bondy to discover whether the money was really in the house. A suspicion of his motives never glanced athwart his mind. He was too deeply absorbed in his own scheme of fraud to think for a moment that another was canvassing in his own mind the chances in favor of his appropriation of the same spoil.

After a little more desultory conversation Bondy took his leave, and so soon as Withers heard the garden door clang behind him, he closed and barred his shutters, locked every avenue of entrance, and went out by the front way.

It was quite dark, and he did not see a crouching form that arose from the corner, and stealthily followed him. Every step he took that night was watched. He went into a coffee-house where he usually supped, and called for what he wanted. He afterward smoked a segar leisurely and then took a much larger draught of brandy than he was in the habit of drinking.

"Ah," muttered the spy, from his distant corner, "that is to keep his spirits up; I don't believe he means to pay over that money honestly, even if he keeps it till morning, which I consider doubtful."

Withers lingered, looking over the evening papers, and

fancying the appearance of the paragraph which would so soon appear, announcing his flight, and the magnitude of his successful fraud. He could well anticipate the comments of the press, but this did not cause him to falter in his course.

Ah! if he could only have been gifted with a gleam of second-sight, how would his hair have bristled with horror at the announcement that those same types would send forth to the world in twenty-four hours from that time.

He must return to his late home, yet there was a dread upon his soul at the thought of the house which had never been lonely to him before. His feelings were inexplicable to himself, and he walked out in the open air to recover his self-possession.

Still that dark form followed him—tracked him back to his own door, and saw him enter. As the door closed on him, Bondy stood erect, and said in muttered tones,

“Now, I am certain the money is there. He always goes to some place of amusement at night, and he does not change his habit without good cause. He would not tell me. O no—he had to be mysterious, but I found it out for myself, and I’ll make a good use of my knowledge, too. I rather think that the ‘wedded love’s first home’ of Mr. Somers is likely to prove a bad bargain.”

While thus muttering, he swiftly passed along the street until he came to a narrow alley that opened from it. A few paces within, he was joined by another man, who eagerly inquired—

“Have you found out whether he has it there?”

“Yes—I am now satisfied that he has not removed it from



his own house. We must lose no time, for I believe that he intends to leave under cover of night, and appropriate it himself. His looks were very strange, when I questioned him about it."

"I am quite ready, but it will not be safe to make an attempt upon the house for several hours yet."

"I have secured the means of entering. I long ago obtained the impression of the key to the front entrance, and had a duplicate made, for he has papers I have long been anxious to get. It will be easy to enter, for Withers I know always takes out the keys at night, and carries them into his own room."

"A stupid precaution, it seems to me."

"It is one that we shall profit by, at all events;" and the two confederates walked away.

On the following morning a scene of confusion and excitement was witnessed in the usually quiet garden that surrounded the abode of Withers. A crowd of eager and alarmed faces filled its shaded walks, and those who penetrated to the interior of the house shuddered and grew pale as they looked upon the pallid and blood-stained figure, which with an awful mockery of death, the murderers had placed erect in a large arm chair, with his feet stretched out before him.

There had evidently been a violent struggle, for blood was sprinkled on every thing, and a large pool had flowed from the numerous wounds of the dead man upon the flowery groundwork of the carpet. The closet was broken open, and its contents scattered on the floor. In the adjoining bed-room the struggle had evidently commenced; there every thing

was in the wildest confusion. Every article of value had been removed; even the rings and the watch of the murdered man. His pocket-book, rifled of its contents, was found upon the floor, and all his papers had disappeared.

A more thorough and systematic robbery had never been perpetrated, nor could one have been more quietly done. The neighbors had heard no alarm; that, however, was not remarkable, as the house was isolated from others, and embowered in shrubbery. The errand-boy was the first to discover the deed. On arriving at the house at an early hour in the morning, as was his usual custom, he found the door imperfectly closed. Alarmed at this, he entered, and beheld a scene that nearly deprived him of his senses. His frantic cries alarmed the people in the street, and soon the rumor of what had occurred filled the house and yard with eager and appalled spectators.

That evening the papers contained the following paragraph:

“A most daring murder and robbery was perpetrated last evening in the lower part of the city, in a lonely house on — street. A large sum of money had been drawn from the bank by John Withers, Esq., a gentleman well known in the speculating world, as a man of enterprise and integrity. The trade which it was designed to close was unhappily postponed, and the deceased imprudently ventured to keep the money in his house. It was entered by burglars, Mr. Withers assassinated, and every thing of value removed. We learn that there is no clew to the perpetrators of the deed.”

Such was the announcement, and much excitement it occasioned in certain circles where Withers was known. The police made every effort to trace the murderers, but without success; and a full account of the untoward event was despatched to Mr. Harrington by Messrs. Hall. A friend of Malcolm's also sent to him, by the same mail, the particulars of the murder and robbery of his agent.

And where was Grace during all this ferment?

Finding that his passenger did not come on board at the appointed time, the captain of the *Euterpe* concluded that unexpected business had detained him, and he would follow the vessel to the Balize, on the first steamer. The tow-boat which was to take the ship to the mouth of the river, came alongside at the appointed hour, and it was impossible to wait for a single passenger, even if his daughter was on board.

Grace had been awake until a late hour of the previous night, talking with her new friend, and she slept late on the following morning. When she awoke, they were many miles below the city, and her distress at the non-appearance of her father, was soothed by the assurance that he would certainly overtake the vessel before she left the Mississippi. Mrs. Dalton endeavored to interest her, to prevent her mind from continually reverting to her father's inexplicable absence, and she found so much feeling and intelligence in this quiet and plain child, that her interest in her deepened every moment.

Mrs. Dalton was a widow, and childless, and her heart opened to the motherless one with a warm sympathy, which

those who have suffered themselves know how to give. Grace watched the approach of every steamer with intense solicitude, for the slow progress of the ship enabled many to pass them, and her face grew more sorrowful as each one went on without hailing.

The ship reached the Balize, and was ready to go on her outward voyage, and still the missing passenger lingered. The captain was in a dilemma about the child. He came into the cabin, holding a newspaper from New Orleans in his hand, which he had just obtained. On the outer page two words, in large letters, were conspicuous, "Awful Tragedy," and then came the details of the recent murder.

As he commenced explaining to Grace that she must remain at the Balize, or go on the voyage without her father, her eye fell on those words. She glanced at the name of the street on which the house occupied by the murdered man was situated, snatched the paper, read the terrible details, and fell senseless on the floor.

When she recovered consciousness she was delirious, and many days elapsed before she was in a condition to give a connected account of the cause of her emotion. The captain wished to leave her to be taken care of at the Balize; but this Mrs. Dalton opposed, and she insisted that her father had been detained, but would follow his daughter in the next ship bound for the same port. She herself would undertake the care of the young girl, and, in the event of her father's non-appearance, Grace should become to her as her own daughter.

Thus released from all responsibility as to her future

fate, the captain consented, and they set sail with the sick girl.

Her recovery was very slow, and on being questioned by Mrs. Dalton, Grace at once revealed the heavy blow which had caused her such severe suffering.

At her request, the paper was sought for, and she pointed out to her protectress the paragraph which had so nearly proved fatal to her existence.

"But, my child," said Mrs. Dalton, "the name of the person who met this sad fate was Withers, and yours is registered as Hamilton."

Grace then repeated to her the story concerning the change in his name, fabricated by her father, and Mrs. Dalton saw no reason to doubt its truth. She folded the orphan to her heart, and told her that in herself she had gained a mother, and from that hour she must consider her in the light of a parent. Mrs. Dalton then went on to inform her that she was very independent in circumstances, but not wealthy.

"My father was not poor, ma'am," replied Grace, with simplicity, "and from something he said the evening we came down to the ship, I think the box he brought on board contained his money, for he intended living in France hereafter."

"So much the better, my love, for my fortune is only a life annuity in the English funds, and it would not enable me to provide for you in a suitable manner in case of my death. Have you no relatives, Grace, who can interfere with my claims upon you?"

"None, madame. My father never spoke of any, and my mother died before I can remember her."

"Then let me take her place in your affections, my dear girl. I promise to cherish you as my own. Call me mother, Grace, and let my name replace the lately assumed one of Hamilton."

Grace wept some sweet tears upon the bosom of her newly-found friend, and promised the love and obedience of a daughter to her, and thus the compact was sealed.

On their arrival in France, Mrs. Dalton placed her adopted daughter in a seminary in the vicinity of Paris, and boarded in the house with her. She led an isolated life in a country in which she had no friends, and of whose language she had but an imperfect knowledge; but this seclusion suited her. She had endured sorrows which destroyed all taste for society, and she was passionately fond of reading. The society of her young protégé gave all the variety to her life that she felt the need of, and her benevolence was interested in the progress and happiness of her adopted daughter.

On opening the box, Mrs. Dalton was surprised to find how large a sum it contained. With the aid of the English banker who managed her own business, it was securely invested for the benefit of Grace Withers Hamilton Dalton; for it was thus she wished her young companion to designate herself, that if by chance any member of her family, or any friend of her father, should happen to meet with her, they might be enabled to recognize her from the united names she bore.

## CHAPTER X.

THE day on which Victor Harrington completed his twenty-third year dawned brilliantly. The gay party assembled around the breakfast table offered their congratulations, and wished him every happiness and success in the future. Victor received them with elated spirits, and glanced toward his hard-looking mother-in-law elect, to see what effect his popularity had on her.

Mrs. Ruskin only curled her lip, and said,

"Wishes cost nothing; nephew. For my part, I might wish you to be the fortunate possessor of Aladdin's lamp, or the purse of Fortunatus, but I should only prove my sincerity by helping you to their attainment, if there was any chance of getting them."

The well-wishers felt these words as a sneer toward themselves, but the most of them knew Mrs. Ruskin, and they said to each other,

"It is only her way. It is useless to pay attention to a person whose life is made up of ill-temper and sarcasm."

Victor was elated by the auspicious commencement of the day, and he felt irritated at his aunt's remark. With heightened color he replied,

"When I ask services at the hands of my friends, madame, and they are refused, it will be time enough to pronounce

their kindly expressed wishes for my success in life, insincere. Thank heaven! that is a test my father's son is not likely soon to put them to."

Mrs. Ruskin smiled skeptically.

"Who knows? Mutual dependence is as much a law of society as any I know. It is nonsense to boast of never asking a favor. I can prove to you, if I choose, that you are ready now to ask of me that which I alone have the authority to bestow."

Victor understood her, and he glanced toward Louise, who blushed slightly, and made a little grimace, while she raised her finger to him as a warning not to reply. They soon after left the table, and Malcolm sought the nook in the library, in which he knew Pauline often ensconced herself, that, in the charms of her conversation, he might beguile his uneasiness at the non-arrival of letters from Withers. He had confidently expected to receive, by the mail of that morning, the assurance that the purchase of the Delolme estate had been completed, and on the following one he designed setting out for the residence of Madame Roget, to secure the promised title. He knew the old lady to be infirm, and he considered it important to have the business completed as soon as possible.

But this morning his fair friend did not make her appearance, and with an impatient exclamation he threw down the book in which he made an effort to interest himself, and strolled toward Mr. Harrington's table. He was about to address him, when an exclamation from that gentleman arrested him.



"What is it?" inquired Malcolm, listlessly, as he extended his hand toward the paper Mr. Harrington held in his trembling grasp. But he had no sooner glanced at the paragraph to which his attention was directed than he too showed evidences of excitement.

"Madame Roget dead!" he exclaimed. "That is a misfortune I had not anticipated. There went a cool hundred thousand from you, my dear sir. But do not become excited; it is only missing a fine speculation."

"But—but the money? The large sum I authorized your agent to draw from my commission merchant," said Mr. Harrington, nervously. "It may have been paid for an estate that I could not hold as my own."

Malcolm glanced at the paper again, and he coolly replied,

"The date of this paper is on the morning of the day on which the money was to be paid. Withers is extremely cautious, and he would certainly have heard of Madame Roget's death before the trade was completed. Make yourself quite easy, Mr. Harrington, I will guaranty the safety of your funds."

"But this Withers? Is he perfectly trustworthy?"

"Perfectly. I have transacted business with him for many years, and I have always found him the soul of punctuality and honor. Feel assured, my dear sir, that your money is in the custody of a shrewd man, who will keep it perfectly safe."

"I trust so—for—" he paused, unwilling to let another see how uneasy he really was, for he best knew the import-

ance of this speculation to his prosperity. By its means, he had hoped to clear his estate from debt, and leave a handsome surplus besides, with which to endow his son on his marriage. Now, that hope was at an end, and he could not repress a vague feeling of uneasiness as to the fate of his thousands. He said,

"I think you expected to hear from the city this morning?"

Malcolm bowed.

"And you did not? The newspapers came, you see: so it was not the fault of the mail."

"I blame no one for the failure," replied Malcolm, slightly annoyed. "I can very well imagine that Withers was so pressed with business, he had not time to notify me of the escape we made. A packet is due to-night, and I shall hear from him with certainty then."

"I trust so," and Mr. Harrington sunk back in his chair in a most unpleasant reverie. Malcolm walked away, and buried himself behind the folds of a heavy curtain that hung over one of the window seats, there to ponder over the thoughts which the unexpected death of Madame Roget elicited. How shocked would his unsuspecting host have been, could he have read what was passing in his mind.

"Suppose Withers should play me false at last?" he mused. "It would play the deuce with my plans, and nearly ruin Mr. Harrington. I should be minus several thousands, but not enough to affect my fortunes seriously. It is strange he did not write, though I would not say so to my host.

Suppose the fifty thousand gone, and Withers eloped! It would save me a world of finesse. Harrington quite in my power, I need not then throw aside the mask. I could play the disinterested friend—could offer such assistance as would stave off ruin, while I held him by the double ties of honor and gratitude. I do believe I could forgive Withers if such were the issue. *My* losses would be more than repaid, could they only result in winning the girl I best love.”

He paused, and then with a half smile, repeated,

“Best love—by heaven! I wish I knew which one that is. Both these bewitching sisters enthrall me. Adèle merely by her beauty; Pauline by her tact, her feeling, her unspeakable charm. What is it that breathes into my hard soul a feeling of tenderness almost feminine, when I am near this girl?”

Unconsciously he had spoken the few last words aloud, and a voice that seemed to come from the clouds said,

“I declare, Mr. Malcolm is so fond of talking that he speaks aloud to himself.”

He started, and looked out; the great tree rustled its branches against the window, on the wide seat of which he had thrown himself. There, amid the arching boughs of the oak, sat Louise, comfortably placed on one of the seats we have before described, striking her foot against a neighboring limb, to give her perch a swinging motion.

“Hebe must have stooped from Olympus to commune with me, favored mortal that I am,” said Malcolm, bowing with mock reverence to the romp, who looked quite as fresh and charming as the handmaiden of the gods herself. She gayly said,

"And what do you think induced my divinityship to condescend to talk with a mere mortal?"

"I am sure I can not guess, unless it was to honor the humblest of her slaves."

"A better one than that. To gratify my curiosity on a subject that puzzles me."

"A divinity puzzled by mere mortal affairs! That is beyond belief, fair goddess. I am persuaded that your own sagacity can enable you to penetrate whatever is of interest to yourself."

"Ay — what interests myself, but not what concerns others."

"What then, would you learn?"

"I am dying to find out which one of my cousins it is you prefer. Do you know it is the gossip of the whole house, and the majority give you to Pauline, because you pay her the most attention? But I have watched you when your eye fell on Adèle, and I set my single opinion against that of the rest. Am I not right? Now tell me, like a good soul, because I have a bet depending on it."

There was a cool effrontery in this, which only Louise Ruskin could have assumed.

Malcolm haughtily answered,

"Really, Miss Ruskin, you have taken an infinite deal of trouble about a matter that, so far as I can see, only concerns myself. Is there any absolute necessity that I should be in love with either of your cousins?"

"O, certainly not. Only you know that every unmarried

man that comes hither thrice, is supposed to be attracted by either one or the other of the daughters."

"I believe the world to which *I* belong, comprehends very well that business, and not love-making, brings me to Wavertree. *Your* world may judge me as it pleases. I can afford to turn a deaf ear to comments to which I am indifferent."

His cheek was slightly flushed, and there was a tone of vexation in his voice in spite of his professed indifference. Louise saw this, and replied with a mocking laugh,

"So the calculating, moneyed world, has a contempt for the butterfly portion of humanity. I thought Mr. Malcolm was ambitious of belonging to both classes, and considered himself successful in his aim too. Come, be truthful now, and confess that Solomon's lilies are, after all, more attractive to your fastidious taste, than those who are born to toil and spin."

"So long as Miss Louise Ruskin is classed among them, I must, of course, reply 'yes' to such a query," said Malcolm, with a low bow of mock respect. Even Louise was a little daunted at this, but she immediately recovered her self-possession and coquettishly replied,

"Thank you. I shall begin to say to the gossips, Withhold your judgment. It is neither wealth or beauty that always wins the day. Sprightliness and gayety may possess a charm superior to either. Adieu, Mr. Malcolm; after that last speech I am satisfied that neither of my cousins is in the ascendant," and with a roguish glance Louise fluttered down from her perch in a manner peculiar to herself.

Light of form, and firm of foot, she sprang from branch to

branch in the old tree with as great celerity as though she had been running down a staircase. Malcolm arose and followed her agile motions with admiration, in spite of the annoyance she had inflicted on him. Ere he withdrew his head from the window, he saw the frowning face of Victor emerge from the shelter of the shrubbery, and he approached his giddy lady love with an expression ominous of one of their numerous quarrels.

They disappeared behind the hedge, and the schemer threw himself upon his seat, and gave himself anew to his own thoughts.

So, subtle as he believed himself, he had permitted his true feelings to be fathomed even by one so young and thoughtless as this girl. Then he tried to console himself with the thought that the outside world must have its gossip, and why should he regard it? It had not been his wont to do so, but now so much was at stake—so uncertain even to himself was the game he was playing, that he wished to shroud his movements from observation as much as possible; as if the lookers on are not always the keenest judges, and the coldest calculators of success, in any game in which the feelings are at all interested.

While Malcolm thus mused, Louise made her peace with her lover, and returned to her mother's room.

Mrs. Ruskin raised her cold eyes to her flushed features, as she entered, and with some appearance of interest inquired,

“Why have you been weeping, Louise? Did my commission end in such a manner as to cause tears?”

"Yes, ma'am, it did; for I have just had such a scene with Victor as I would not go through again for any consideration."

"Victor is presumptuous, and troublesome," replied the elder lady, with asperity. "Tell me what occurred to make him angry?"

"Only this; in obedience to your commands, I went in search of Mr. Malcolm. He was in the library with my uncle, and without attracting his notice I could not join him there. After a while he placed himself in the window nearest the great tree, so I mounted in that, and asked him what you wish to know."

"You asked him, child? What do you mean by that? Did you put so brusque a question to him as that?"

"Yes, ma'am—you know I never have patience to take a round-about way to any thing, so I asked him plainly what I wished to find out."

"Stupid! have you no tact, no finesse, that you would approach a man like Malcolm in that way? And what did he answer?"

"Just as I might have expected. He defended himself from the charge of loving either of my cousins by a mockingly expressed admiration for myself."

"Then—really—how do you know he was not in earnest, Louise? You are pretty, and piquant; just the sort of person to attract a grave, sober man like Malcolm. Suppose he should be in earnest?"

"Then I can only say so much the worse for him. But I know that he only took that means of defending himself from

a charge he felt to be serious. You may not think my opinion worth much, mother, but Adèle is the load-star. I have seen that in his eyes when they turned on her, which I have read in Victor's for myself—by that same token I know that it means love.”

“If it is Adèle, there is no danger, for she will never marry him. Don't be silly about Victor, Louise, and I believe I can secure this brilliant destiny for you.”

“I do n't want it,” said Louise, pettishly. “Victor will be rich enough, and we like each other. If any man on earth could make me afraid of him it would be this Malcolm. I declare when I asked him that simple question about my cousins, he looked at me like a tiger, until he recollected himself, and tried to make me believe he had not thought of being in love with either of them.”

“You are but a child, Louise, and reason like one. I do not consider you bound by any promise you have made to Victor; for I have never yet been formally required to give my consent, and without that the contract is void.”

Louise looked at her mother doubtfully—she slowly said,

“To listen to you, ma'am, one would suppose that you only spoke of a contract for the transfer of property. You suffered Victor and myself as children to speak openly of this engagement, and to regard each other as lovers. How then can you now oppose what you have so long tacitly sanctioned?”

“When I did that, I thought your uncle far richer than I now have reason to believe he is. You can bring no fortune to your husband, for until my death your father's estate is



bequeathed to my control. It is too small to bear dismemberment, and afford to the other children the same advantages you have enjoyed. If you marry Victor, you must come here and live, for I know your uncle is not in a position to give him a home of his own, and Victor is not the sort of person to make a living for himself. Think how different your life would be, united to a self-sustained man like Malcolm. Already the possessor of wealth, which the future will surely increase, he could afford you an elegant home in a large city where you could become the centre of a brilliant circle. You could travel—”

Louise put her hands over her ears, and exclaimed,

“No more, no more, mother: it is useless. I have just promised Victor that I will marry him next month, if my uncle wishes it. He saw me in the tree talking to Mr. Malcolm, and he was so jealous and angry I could pacify him in no other way. You know you can not refuse your consent when my uncle asks it, so these temptations to swerve from truth to him I really prefer, need not be offered.”

Mrs. Ruskin assumed her haughtiest air.

“I am not bound to say yes, to every thing my brother may ask; especially when the demand is for my daughter's hand, who is yet too much of a child to be capable of comprehending her true interests. You shall not marry Victor next month. It is hurrying matters too much, and I can easily convince your uncle that you are yet too young to become a bride. The young gentleman can recover his good humor at a less price than the sacrifice of a girl who might

become a distinguished belle if she would use her chances well."

With skill Mrs. Ruskin had touched a cord that always vibrated to her touch, for this was the sole ambition of Louise, and to its gratification she was even capable of sacrificing her affection for Victor. Intensely had she desired to emulate the career of her cousin Adèle, and she replied,

"Very well, ma'am ; act as you please—I only thought you wished me settled and out of Georgiana's way. I shall be glad to make my peace with Victor at less cost than this early sacrifice of my girlish freedom."

"Now you talk reasonably, my daughter, I can easily arrange it. As to Georgiana, she will remain at school another year."

Thus spoke the worldly-minded mother, unconscious that a crisis was rapidly approaching, which would give her a good pretext for breaking the engagement altogether.

## CHAPTER XI.

IN the rear of the mansion of Wavertree, situated in a grove of live oaks, was a long building, the lower story of which was an extensive conservatory, and the upper one a ball-room. The latter was lighted by an immense glass chandelier which hung from the arched roof. The white walls were draped with evergreens, among which transparent paintings were placed. Long wreaths of wild vines from the woodland were festooned over-head, and colored lights peered from their foliage.

The decorations were so contrived as to give the room the appearance of an immense leafy temple in which sported dryads of exceeding loveliness and grace. The fair daughters of Louisiana appeared to much advantage amid the fairy scene, and a more graceful or elegant number of young girls could scarcely have been collected together from any quarter of the world.

The brilliant eyes, luxuriant hair, and willowy grace which characterizes the Creoles, were seen in perfection, and even the matchless Adèle found many among their guests who were not unworthy to stand on the throne beside her. A fine band from New Orleans filled the large hall with a flood of melody, and glad feet twinkled in the graceful waltz and merry polka.

Pauline and her sister were attired alike in gossamer dresses, embroidered with silver and worn with pearl ornaments. It was a fancy of the sisters to dress alike, and it was unfortunate for the less beautiful one that it was so. It brought their different styles in such vivid contrast, that Pauline always lost much by the comparison.

Malcolm gazed upon the two as they stood side by side to receive their guests, and to him, Adèle seemed a divinity who condescended for a brief space to bear the burden of mortality, while Pauline was only a lovely and affectionate woman. He thought of Wordsworth's lines as he glanced toward her,

"A being not too bright or good  
For human nature's daily food,"

and his heart felt a warm thrill of emotion ; but when his eye passed to the more beautiful sister, his blood seemed rushing in a burning torrent through his frame, and again in his deep soul, he said,

"She must, she shall be mine, at any cost."

From a short distance, Louise was watching him, and she felt confirmed in her suspicions. Louise wore a fanciful costume which suited her extremely well. A scarlet silk skirt trimmed with black velvet, and a bodice to match the trimming, laced up in front over an embroidered chemisette, scarlet stockings, with black satin shoes laced high up on the ankle, showed her small, well-shaped feet to advantage. Her fair neck, and finely moulded arms were bare, and without jewels, and her hair was dressed without other ornament than its own silky beauty.

Victor, in the most exquisite of costumes, and with the blackest of moustaches, was beside his cousin, ready to begin the polka which they had been assiduously practicing every day since her arrival. He was in the most radiant of humors, for his ruthless aunt had not yet had an opportunity to shatter his *château en Espagne*, and he reveled in the belief that one little month would give him the authority of a husband over his coquettish inamorata. Mrs. Ruskin had considered it best to defer her conversation with her brother, relative to the proposed marriage, until after the bustle of the ball was over. Thus poor Victor enjoyed one evening of unalloyed happiness; the last the poor fellow would probably ever realize.

Louise was kinder than usual; and there was an expression in her glance that thrilled his soul with bliss. She knew how baseless was his vision of happiness, and compassion for him imparted a softness to her manner which completed her power of fascination. The young Creole planters thronged around her, and she had more solicitations to dance than she could possibly accept. She began to realize the triumph of being a belle, even in the presence of the enchanting Adèle.

Louise was not of a nature to comprehend that the homage which enchanted her, was considered by her loftier cousin as a common, and not always acceptable tribute to her charms. Adèle had drained the cup of adulation to its dregs, and she turned from its emptiness with the conviction that her soul was not formed to be satisfied with such ephemeral triumphs. It craved something higher, nobler, something more in harmony with the immortal spirit within.

Mr. Harrington had resolutely cast aside the uneasiness that hung over him. Throughout the day a vague dread of impending evil haunted his mind, but as night approached, and the necessity for arousing himself became imperative, he came forth amid his guests, and from that social sympathy which was so prominent an element in his character, he soon acquired the power to throw off the unusual weight, and join in the festivities of the evening with his usual zest. Never had he been more cordial to his friends, and many remembered that entertainment at Wavertree, as the last in which the hospitable host appeared in his true element.

Mr. Harrington was even persuaded, by a young Creole girl, to dance a gay measure with her, and at its close, the band played the march which was the signal for supper. Followed by the company, he conducted his lively partner down a broad flight of steps leading into the conservatory, which looked more like a fairy temple than a spot dedicated to the mundane enjoyment of satisfying the appetite. Gorgeous flowering plants were skillfully arranged around the walls of glass; and in the centre, stretched a long table, elegantly decorated, and bearing upon it every luxury that wealth could purchase.

"It would not be so bad to live here, after all," thought Louise, as she entered, leaning on the arm of Malcolm; for that gentleman, to Victor's extreme discomfiture, had danced with her more than once, and actually engaged her to go down to supper with him, before he, in his exultation, had thought of any thing so commonplace as eating.

Malcolm had a double motive for this. He wished to

mislead the suspicions of Louise, and at the same time to discover, if possible, if her mother had not instigated the inquiries she had so hardily propounded to himself. Mrs. Ruskin was charmed to see her daughter thus escorted, and the vain heart of Louise exulted as she floated past her cousins, attended by their devoted cavalier.

Louise was transparent enough, for she was too giddy to be artful, and the skillful man of the world found out all he cared to know, without betraying himself. Henceforth he was armed against all the manœuvres of Mrs. Ruskin, and he secretly laughed, as he thought how easily he could foil her plans.

Supper was nearly over, and Malcolm was wishing it was at an end, for he began to weary of the volatile chatter of his fair companion, when a new arrival attracted his attention. The packet from New Orleans, which had been expected at twilight, had only now arrived, bringing on it several gentlemen who had been invited to the festival. Among them was an admirer of Miss Ruskin's, who joined her immediately, and fortunately monopolized her attention while a voice whispered in Malcolm's ear,

"Excuse yourself to Miss Ruskin, and let Nevin take your place a few moments. I have something of moment to communicate to you."

In more perturbation than he would have wished to betray, Malcolm bowed to Louise, and smiled as blandly as usual, as he said,

"I am constrained to be guilty of a great rudeness, Miss Ruskin. See the consequences of having a solemn man of

business to escort you in this festive scene. Will you excuse me five minutes, while Nevin takes my place, and I go with my newly-arrived friend, to hear important news?"

"Certainly," replied Louise, carelessly, already deep in a flirtation with the new arrival.

As he turned away, he said,

"Remember, you are to dance the next polka with me."

"O no—I only polk with Victor; but I will waltz with you after supper."

"Waltz be it, then," and with a gay air he turned, and soon disappeared with his friend.

No sooner were they beyond the lights and glare of the conservatory, than the expression of his features changed marvelously. He plunged into the shadow of the trees, and then said briefly, almost sternly,

"What has happened, Lennard? The sound of your voice startled me greatly, for there was a tone in it that seemed ominous of ruin."

"I do not know if the loss of fifty thousand dollars will ruin you, but if you have confided that sum to Withers I have to tell you that it is irretrievably lost."

"Lost—how? He has not surely eloped, or paid it without knowing that Madame Roget was dead?"

"Neither—he learned her death in time to refuse to close the trade; but unfortunately he drew the money, and was foolhardy enough to keep it in the house with him. He was robbed and assassinated."

"Murdered!" exclaimed Malcolm, with a shudder. "The



money irrevocably gone! Good heavens! This is a sad affair for our friend Harrington."

"The fifty thousand was not yours then?"

"No—but it is useless now to explain. Is there no possible clew to the robbers?"

"None—the police are entirely at fault. Withers had no intimates—he lived a quiet and secluded life, as you know. There never was an affair of the kind enveloped in more profound mystery."

There was a pause, and then Malcolm spoke with vague bitterness, as he waved his hand toward the scene of pleasure,

"Hark! hear that music—look on that brilliantly-lighted saloon, in which is gathered the élite of the whole parish. Will it not be strange news to them that the giver of the feast is a ruined man? Of all the guests collected here, I wonder how many of them would come forward to assist him with the thousands so many have at their command?"

His companion shrugged his shoulders:

"Not many, I fancy. Prodigality must find an end to its wastefulness at last. This will be a lightning stroke to the exquisite son, and dainty daughters. I fancy the beauty will be less fastidious now than formerly."

A fiery gleam lighted up the eyes of Malcolm, and he clenched his hands until the nails wounded the flesh, but he did not utter the angry feeling that swept through his mind at such an allusion to Adèle. He knew the speaker had been an unsuccessful suitor to her, and he therefore pardoned his

petty spite. Already had the open-handed generosity of the man of abundant means found a harsh name. What was called liberality in the wealthy planter, was stigmatized as prodigality in him over whom the first cloud of misfortune began to lower. He briefly said,

"Mr. Harrington has been unfortunate, but not blamable. He only endeavored to increase his possessions as many men do, and the chances have been against him—that is all: he may recover yet. I spoke precipitately—I was shocked and hurried by the sudden announcement of this fatal catastrophe."

"Hum," said Lennard, discontentedly, "I hope affairs may be so managed as not quite to ruin him. Let us return to the supper-room; since I was so fortunate as to come in at the fag-end of the feast, I wish to enjoy as much of it as possible before it closes—especially as, from present indications, it is likely to be the last."

Revolted by his hardness, and half offended by his evident hostility toward the family whose hospitality he was enjoying, Malcolm accompanied him in silence.

As they entered the conservatory, there was a slight lull in the eager buzz of conversation, and Mr. Harrington stood at the head of the table, holding a goblet of wine in his hand, from which he was about to drink to the health of his guests. In a few well-chosen words he expressed the hope that he should often have the pleasure of thus assembling them beneath his roof.

This little speech was received with audible murmurs of applause; he was in the act of lifting the sparkling draught

to his lips, when a few words were uttered near him. He grew pale—spilled the wine, and tremulously replaced the goblet upon the table; then seeming to recover his self-possession, he again lifted it, quaffed the contents with an effort, but the crystal fell from his nerveless grasp, and was shattered into fragments at his feet. With a vague look around, he comprehended that those near him thought him ill. In reply to their anxious queries, he muttered,

“No—no—not ill—not ill—only stricken—stricken,” and with the effort to raise himself to a more erect position, he reeled, and would have fallen, had he not been sustained by others.

The words which had produced this fatal emotion were uttered at random by two of the guests. A gentleman inquired of one of the newly-arrived party,

“What is this story about the murder and robbery of Withers?”

“O, a very bad one. He had drawn fifty thousand dollars from one of his numerous patrons, to pay for the Delolme estate. The trade was not completed; he kept the money by him, and that night his house was robbed, and himself assassinated.”

Malcolm comprehended what had happened so soon as he caught a view of the ghastly features of Mr. Harrington. He pushed his way through the crowd until he reached him, and then whispered,

“For heaven’s sake, my dear sir, control this emotion. I believe I know its cause; to conceal it is of the last importance to you.”

Mr. Harrington regarded him with a stony expression which greatly alarmed him.

"Get me away from here," he said ; "I shall suffocate in this crowd."

A way was opened to the door, and, attended by the alarmed members of his own family, he went out, leaning on the arm of Malcolm. As he gained the door, he turned, waved his hand, and spoke more collectedly,

"My friends, enjoy yourselves—my illness will soon be over. Let it not mar your pleasure."

As he passed out, Lennard sneered,

"No danger of that. The giver of the feast is the last person thought of after the compliments of the evening are offered."

"I do not agree with you, sir," said a gentleman who overheard him ; "especially when the host is such a man as the one who has just left us."

Finding that his cynicism was not agreeable to every one, Lennard joined Louise Ruskin, and said,

"Malcolm has gone to look after your uncle, Miss Louise, and I indulge the hope that you will accept me in his place as a partner for the next waltz. I have something for your especial ear, fair lady."

"Is my uncle really so ill ? I thought it was only a little dizziness, from which he will soon recover."

"So it is : but Malcolm must not neglect his father-in-law elect, you know. He will not return in time. Besides, I have a secret for you."

"A secret ! I never kept one in my life : and you think

yours a temptation to me to forego my engagement with Mr. Malcolm. Is it not so?"

"Excuse me; I prefer not giving a direct answer to that; but I really *have* something to reveal to you that may seriously influence your conduct toward a certain person."

"Well, I believe I must hear that," and Louise took his arm to return to the ball-room, contenting herself with requesting Nevin to inquire how her uncle now was, and bring her word.

Victor had followed the family group, and while Lennard and Louise promenaded the room he poured into her ears the story of her uncle's ruin.

She listened in pained silence, for thoughtless and worldly as she was, Louise was not destitute of feeling. She sorrowfully felt how changed were her relations with Victor by this disastrous reverse, and she felt that her kind uncle held a warmer place in her regard than she could have believed, before this catastrophe.

"Are you quite sure of all this, Mr. Lennard?" she asked.

"As sure as a man can be who knows all about it. The world has given you to Victor Harrington, Miss Ruskin; but I place no faith in the report. I, however, thought it best to warn you, that if there is any truth in it, you may recede in time."

She seemed annoyed, and coldly replied,

"Thank you, but there is no need for the caution. We are cousins, and therefore come within the degrees forbidden to marry by one church at least. My mother has prejudices on that score too. Under such circumstances, it is not likely

that Victor and myself will ever seek to become more to each other than we now are. We have a cousinly regard for each other, but no more."

Her cheek glowed at the falsehood, but she knew Lennard to be a gossip and a bitter retailer of the weaknesses of others. To her, any thing seemed better than exposing the true state of affairs between herself and Victor. Lennard went on talking and speculating on the changes likely to occur at Wavertree, but she listened vacantly, and responded at random.

The dancing did not recommence until the sisters, attended by their brother, returned to the ball-room, and to the numerous inquiries addressed to them, replied that their father was better, and requested that the music should no longer be silent.

Again the dancing was resumed, and continued until nearly daylight. The pale and suffering sisters then sought their father's room, to learn how he had passed the hours of their enforced absence from him.

They found him sleeping heavily and uneasily, with flushed features, and labored breathing. Miss Harrington sat beside the bed, watching him with great solicitude. She said,

"My dear girls, your father sleeps, and you had better seek the repose you need yourselves. Be not uneasy about him; I will not leave him."

"But you are worn out yourself, aunt. Let one of us remain here, while you rest."

"No, Pauline. I can not sleep—and this large chair of-

fers me as much repose as I need. Sleep, sleep, my child, for you know not what call may soon be made on your energies."

"Do you think my father dangerously ill?" asked Adèle, apprehensively.

"Not at present, my dear."

Pauline examined his flushed face.

"Has he taken an anodyne, Aunt Gertrude, that he breathes so heavily?"

"No—he has taken nothing. Many persons are so constituted that a sudden shock seems to paralyze the nervous sensibility, and sleep becomes necessary to them. In such a condition your father seems now to lie."

"But what shock has he met with? Has any thing happened?"

"I believe he heard unpleasant news from New Orleans, concerning money transactions in which he was interested. There, run away to your own room—it is quite day, and you look tired to death."

With lighter hearts the sisters obeyed. A difficulty of that kind could only be temporary to one of their father's means, they thought; and, therefore, things would soon flow on at Wavertree in their usual course.

Miss Harrington sat alone beside the couch of her brother, awaiting the arrival of the physician who had been hastily summoned. Dr. Germain resided several miles from Wavertree, and when the messenger reached his house, he was not at home. He went in search of him, and in extreme uneasiness the attached sister awaited his arrival. She was too

experienced a judge of sickness not to be aware that her brother was in imminent danger of a stroke of apoplexy, and with the deepest solicitude she listened to every noise which might indicate the approach of the physician.

It was bright day when he arrived, and he came directly to the bedside of his patient.

"Nothing serious the matter, I trust, Miss Harrington," he said in a low tone, as he entered. "The eagerness of the negro boy, and his disjointed story, gave me great uneasiness until I arrived. Then Mr. Malcolm, whom I met in the yard, told me that your brother is suffering more in mind than in body."

"I am afraid that his mind has not acted for several hours, doctor. He has slept heavily ever since we have succeeded in getting him in bed."

With a slow, cautious movement, the physician raised the heavy curtain from the window nearest the bed, and suffered the light to fall on the flushed face of the sleeper. One glance showed his experienced eye that what he feared had really taken place. He dropped the curtain and asked,

"Has your brother lain motionless ever since you watched beside him, Miss Harrington?"

"No—at first he was restless, and spoke several times ; but he gradually sunk into silence, and then commenced this heavy breathing. I know what you apprehend, doctor, for the same fear has been in my own mind. Can apoplexy be averted by medical treatment?"

"If I had been on the spot at first, I might have saved him



from this. O would that I had been here, and then this good man would not be here, and thus."

He wiped the moisture from his eyes as he gazed upon his old friend, lying so helpless before him. Miss Harrington became alarmed. She tremulously asked,

"Has my brother really had a fit?"

"A slight one. I can relieve him for the present, Miss Gertrude, so do not be alarmed. But it always painfully affects me to see a noble man thus stricken down in the pride of his strength. Never do I so forcibly feel what helpless atoms we are in the eyes of the Great Omnipotent, as when I behold such a sight as this."

With skill and success Dr. Germain applied such remedies as restored Mr. Harrington to consciousness in a few hours, and it was agreed between himself and the affectionate sister, that the nature of the attack should be concealed, as far as possible, from the sick man, and also from the friends of the family. The household were, therefore, warned to be guarded in reference to his illness, either to himself or others.

During the day, the guests dispersed to their various homes, leaving only Mrs. Ruskin, her daughter, and Malcolm, with the family.

## CHAPTER XII.

MALCOLM felt compelled to leave Wavertree as soon as possible for New Orleans, to attend to business which the sudden death of Withers had left in a confused and precarious state; but he also felt the necessity of communicating with Mr. Harrington before his departure.

He waited in great uneasiness until day began to decline, in the hope that the invalid would be sufficiently recovered to give his attention a few moments to what he wished to say to him. At first, Dr. Germain opposed his wish, as any excitement in Mr. Harrington's weakened and critical condition, must be injurious; but Malcolm hinted to him the cause of the attack, and assured him that he possessed the power to remove from the sick man's mind much of the weight that oppressed it.

In this view of the case, the physician consented that he should see him; and Malcolm was ushered into the invalid's apartment. Mr. Harrington, pallid and exhausted from excessive loss of blood, lay against a pile of pillows, with his eyes half closed. At the sound of footsteps, he feebly raised them, and a faint glow of color crossed his cheek as he recognized his visitor. He made a deprecating sign with his hand, and muttered,

"Not now, not now, Malcolm. I am too weak to think."

"I came to relieve you from the most pressing portion of your mental weight, my dear sir," replied Malcolm, soothingly. "I do not ask you to talk; only listen to me, and I think you will find cause to be less despondent."

"Let me hear it," he feebly said. "But do not be surprised if I can not always follow your meaning. My brain seems in a chaotic state, which I can scarcely account for. The tendency of blood to the brain frightened my sister, and she persuaded the doctor to bleed me until I am as weak as a child."

"You will soon recover from that, my dear sir; and now I will speak of what brought me hither. You remember accurately what so unnerved you last night?"

Mr. Harrington assented, and the expression of his face showed that while consciousness was with him, that recollection would not soon be effaced. Malcolm went on:

"I came to you to propose a remedy for it."

The attention of the sick man was now fully aroused, and he evidently listened with the keenest interest. He said,

"Let me hear it; perhaps it will give me strength to live."

"To live—O yes, my dear friend; and to enjoy life too. I am certain that I can restore to you the means of so doing without compromising either your fortune or your integrity."

Mr. Harrington's eyes gleamed with new lustre, and he grasped the hand of the speaker.

"Do this, and I shall indeed believe you my friend. Let me hear what you propose."

"It is this. I offer to advance you the sum requisite to repay this debt to Messrs. Hall, if you will transfer the mortgage on this place to me. You know that I will make no illiberal use of it, and in fact, it seems only a family arrangement, since you are so kind as to permit me to hope that a nearer tie will one day connect us."

"Only on the condition that my daughter freely consents. I will not barter my child for money, however much I may need it."

Malcolm was glad he spoke vaguely of his daughter, as it afforded him a pretext to evade defining his position, without actually telling a falsehood. He quietly replied,

"I fully understand that; but with your sanction to my pretensions, I do not apprehend a failure where my heart is so deeply interested."

There was a slight pause. Mr. Harrington moved restlessly, and Malcolm again proceeded,

"You will pardon me, I hope, for what I am about to say, but in consideration of the deep interest I feel for you, I am compelled to speak what I think will be for the best. Your income is large: reduce your expenses one half, and you will still live in as handsome style as any of your neighbors. Apply the half saved to the reduction of this debt, and in four years you will be free."

"Ah—if that were all," sighed the sick man. "But my liabilities are large, aside from that."

Malcolm pondered a moment, and then said,

"Our other speculations may enable you to clear off those. I am sanguine of success in them."

Mr. Harrington shuddered ; he repeated,

"Speculation ! I would to heaven I had never heard the word, or been tempted to barter my peace of mind for any increase of wealth. If I had possessed the strength to make the retrenchment now imperatively needed, I could have extricated myself from every embarrassment without recourse to such doubtful means of increasing my fortune. After all, who have I really gratified by the lavish display which has so long surrounded me ? I begin to think that wealth is a gift to be held in trust for the benefit of others. But who has been benefited by mine ? Flatterers, parasites, and the seekers after amusement, are all who have shared with me in the bounties Providence has lavished upon me."

"Dear sir, these are only the grim fancies of a sick bed. I have been told of many acts of yours, which prove that you are never deaf to the call of benevolence."

"No, Malcolm, my liberality does not deserve the name of benevolence. It was only a good-natured dislike to see others suffer for what I possessed in abundance. I have given freely, I know, but often to objects I knew to be unworthy. Now, when I can no longer give, I feel this. Ah ! what pure and noble pleasure have I sacrificed to my love of ease, and the outward show that surrounds me ! As I lie here, I feel the vanity of all those things."

"If all men had as little to reproach themselves with as you have, my dear friend," said Malcolm, "the recording angel would have few sins to blot out with his tears."

Mr. Harrington closed his eyes wearily, and seemed to meditate. Presently he said,

"We have wandered from the subject. Let us understand each other at once. I gladly consent to your offer to release me from this debt to my merchants, for with so large an addition to what I already owe them, I could not ask them to wait longer with me. You can have such an instrument drawn as is necessary, and on your return I will execute such legal formalities as are needful."

Malcolm's face grew bright with triumph—but he sat with his back to the evening light, and the sick man could not see its expression. He gently said,

"Thank you; I rejoice in the power to serve you. I must leave immediately for New Orleans; there I will arrange every thing with Messrs. Hall, and, on my return, the mortgage can be settled."

"Do as your judgment dictates, Malcolm. I have implicit reliance on your friendship for me."

Malcolm winced a little at this, but in the next moment he felt renewed pride in the skill with which he had managed his dupe.

After a pause, Mr. Harrington went on,

"I must curtail my expenses still further, for I feel that it will not be honest to live in such elegance as even the half of my income will purchase, while a debt of such importance is hanging over me. Arrange with Messrs. Hall for me, that I will pay them annually six thousand dollars on their claim until it is liquidated."

"But, just as your son is about to marry, how can you do

this? His allowance, has, I believe, been at least half the sum you propose to retain for the support of your whole establishment."

"Victor must now content himself with one third of that sum, and if he marries he can bring his bride here. She will be doubly welcome, since we can no longer afford to entertain so much company as heretofore. The sprightliness of Louise will enliven us all; my children, I truly believe, will be ready to make any sacrifice to bring peace to my mind."

Of the daughters, Malcolm readily believed this, but he was doubtful about the ready acquiescence of Victor. He knew more of the young man's affairs than his father was likely to be aware of, and he knew that Victor had far exceeded his allowance, liberal as it was. How then would it be possible for him to live on a few hundreds a year with a wife of fashionable habits and expensive tastes? This, however, was no concern of his, and he seemingly assented to Mr. Harrington's observation. He arose, and pressing the hand of the sick man, said,

"Set your mind at rest, dear sir, and recover as rapidly as possible. I will settle every thing with your merchants to your satisfaction, and in a few weeks I hope to be able to return to claim my reward."

Mr. Harrington smiled faintly; he said,

"Always with the understanding that my daughter freely consents. These business details must be kept from her knowledge, lest they might influence her decision."

"I should wish that as earnestly as yourself, of course," were the words of Malcolm's reply, though he scorned him-

self for their falseness as they were uttered. As he passed from the room, he met Miss Harrington at the door. He paused, and said,

"You were uneasy at this protracted interview, Miss Harrington, but I believe I may pledge you my word that it has not injured your brother. On the contrary, he will be better for what has passed between us; and now I must bid you farewell, as a packet is momentarily expected, and on it I leave for New Orleans."

"We shall see you again before very long?" she courteously inquired, for even Aunt Gertrude was not proof against Malcom's fascinating address. Her usual insight into character seemed here completely baffled, and, like her brother, she began to place implicit faith in the honor of him who seemed formed to win golden opinions from all the world. He smiled brilliantly, as he replied,

"O yes, ma'am. You do not so easily get rid of one who has found so many attractions beneath this roof. Can you tell me where I can find the young ladies, Miss Harrington?"

"Adèle is suffering from headache; the shock of seeing her father so ill quite overcame her, poor child; but Pauline has more fortitude—you will find her in the library, whither she went to answer some letters on business for my brother."

After bidding her farewell, Malcolm slowly proceeded toward the library, endeavoring by the way to stifle the strange interest which Pauline ever created in his heart. Near her, he was always on his guard, lest an expression of too much warmth should compromise him, and render his posi-



tion between the two sisters more difficult than it already was.

He found her seated beside her father's table, busily engaged in writing, and the evening sunshine quivered through the leaves of the old tree upon her delicately-moulded hands and colorless face. The folds of silken hair, more carelessly arranged than usual, for she had watched beside her father many hours of the day, contrasted their glossy brightness with her worn and wearied features. Malcolm paused on the threshold and watched her several moments, and so easily impressed by mere outward appearance was he, that he wondered how that pale, inanimate, and ordinary-looking girl had possessed the power, even for an instant, to interest his heart. As Pauline now appeared, the spell was broken, and he felt that he no longer feared himself.

He advanced leisurely into the room ; as the sound of his step fell upon the carpet, a clear streak of crimson swept across the pale cheek, for the writer recognized that tread. She raised her eyes from the paper, they glanced an instant into his own, and by a subtle electric influence he could not comprehend, those wonderful eyes drew him at once to her side with a heart full of sympathy for her sorrow. Yet the eyes of Pauline were neither magnificent nor unfathomable—they were tender human eyes, which expressed kindness, affection, and truth ; and by ordinary observers, they would not perhaps have been considered very beautiful, but to those she loved, they were indeed “wells of light ;” to such, her plain face became transfigured and shone with wonderful loveliness.

"You have been with my father?" she said. "Ah! how his poor pallid face made my heart ache, as I sat beside him to-day. And then to think of the awful dread that must remain with us, that he may be struck down at any moment by a similar attack, and snatched from us forever."

"Forever," repeated Malcolm, with a softened inflexion in his voice he could not control. "I thought your faith taught you a better lesson than that, Pauline."

It was the first time he had ventured to call her thus, and a strange thrill of happiness quivered through her unquiet heart, at the sound of her own name thus pronounced. She reverently answered,

"I spoke too vaguely on a subject of such moment. I simply meant that on earth we should behold him no more. Do you really think my father is in great danger, Mr. Malcolm?"

"By no means. He seems quite relieved now; in a few days his strength will return, and you will see him as well as ever."

She doubtfully answered,

"I fear not. If the cause could be removed, perhaps it might be so. It seems so strange to me that a difficulty about money should so seriously affect my father. I have always seen him so lavish in his expenditure, that distress of that kind would never have occurred to me, but for the assurance of my aunt that such is really the case."

"The very liberality of which you speak has probably caused his embarrassment. I will not deceive you, Pauline; your father has met with heavy losses, and it will be neces-

sary to alter his present style of living materially, to release him from encumbrances that have been increasing from year to year, until they have become oppressive."

"O! why did he not sooner let us know this?" she exclaimed. "Could my father think so meanly of his children as to suppose that we would not cheerfully resign the outward pageantry of life, to secure him peace, and repose of mind?"

"He fully believes this, I assure you, for he but now expressed it to me. Until a recent loss, which became known to him too suddenly last night, he was not uneasy about the other debts. Both together might have been something serious to contend with, had I not fortunately possessed the power to aid in extricating him from his most pressing embarrassment.

"You!—O how shall I thank you?" exclaimed the young girl, with clasped hands, and eyes shining through tears.

Malcolm had purposely revealed this to her to witness its effect. He wished the sisters to know and feel the obligation under which their father rested to him, but he was touched deeply at Pauline's delighted emotion. It plainly said, that to him of all the world, she preferred her father should be indebted for his release from his difficulties. He took her hand, and his heart fluttered as he felt its tremulous throbbing within his own. His strong impulse was to press it to his lips and heart, and ask her to bestow it upon him forever.

Words trembled on his lips, which would have rendered it impossible for him to retract, when a voice spoke beneath the

window, which sent back those burning messengers with a recoil that blanched his dark cheek, and made the strong man tremble at the precipice on which he stood.

He dropped her hand, and gazed down upon the fair face of Adèle, who, with her head thrown back, stood looking up, calling upon her sister to join her in a walk. She, too, was slightly paler than usual, but this spiritual fairness seemed to give a new charm to her sculptured features. Malcolm stood freed from the spell of Pauline, for the greater enchantress had appeared, and his soul sank in willing homage before her.

Adèle smiled as she recognized Malcolm. She said,

"You there, too, Mr. Malcolm? That is a pleasure I had not anticipated. Come with my sister, and let us walk on the levee. It will cure my head-ache, I believe."

Pauline demurred—her letters were not quite completed, and they must go by that night's mail.

"Insist on her coming, Mr. Malcolm," urged Adèle. "She has been in the house all day, and looks like a ghost. Bring her down, and I will assist her to finish her letters when we return. Hark! there is a boat coming—hurry, and we will reach the levee in time to see it sweep past."

"Come," said Malcolm, rapidly. "I know by the sound that it comes down stream—and I must leave on it."

"So soon?—I thought you would yet remain a few days, until my father is quite restored."

"It is for his sake that I go at once; I have not a moment to lose, for the boat is rounding to now. I sought you here to bid you farewell."

As they descended toward the yard, Pauline asked,

"How long before you will return to Wavertree?"

"Not long—a week—perhaps ten days. It depends on the business I have to arrange. At all events, you will see me again before very long."

They were joined by Adèle; after a brief adieu, Malcolm hurried on the steamer, followed by his servant, and was rapidly borne down the Mississippi, with the exulting conviction in his mind that the fastidious sisters were both securely in his power—one through a love that betrayed itself in every varying expression of her face, the other through her fond affection for her father.

The two girls walked on, and Pauline revealed to Adèle precisely what Malcolm wished her to learn. With impassioned earnestness she related how generously he had offered his aid to her father, at a moment when it was all-important to him. Adèle listened with deep interest. She thoughtfully asked,

"How can this service be returned? It is a great deal for one almost a stranger to us, to do, Pauline."

"A stranger! O, Adèle, how can you speak thus of him who has made himself dear to every heart at Watertree?" exclaimed Pauline, with fervor.

"Still, he has only been known to us a few short weeks. I can believe that you love him, sister, for he has made steady efforts to win your affection; you see I was right in the opinion I expressed when we last spoke together of Mr. Malcolm."

"Until to-day I never dared to think so, Adèle; but half

an hour since, had you not spoken beneath the window, the declaration I wish yet fear to hear, would have been made. I saw that the expression of his feelings trembled on his lips; but the sound of your voice called us both back to this world of conventionalities. We joined you, and he left unspoken those words which must have influenced my fate forever."

"Unlucky mar-all that I am! What perverse fate called me there at that particular moment, I wonder?" said Adèle, in a vexed tone, though she half smiled at her own earnestness. She added,

"Never mind—the words will yet be uttered, dearest, and I shall see you the happy wife of this lordly Malcolm."

Had Malcolm seen Pauline's face at that moment, he must have thought it beautiful. The light within glowed through the plain features, illuminating them with the divine glow of happiness. The words of her sister sent a thrill of rapture through her veins. *His wife*—the loved companion of his life—the partner of his joys and sorrows! There was bliss unutterable in the thought; and she was firmly impressed with the belief that such would indeed be her fortunate lot. All other sorrows were as gossamer weights to her now—and she almost felt remorse that she could be so buoyantly happy while her beloved father lay upon a bed of suffering.

Sweet and joyful was the sisterly communion that evening, as they strolled along the margin of the river, and never did the declining sun fall on two more self-sacrificing, and generous-hearted beings. The embarrassments of their father were fully canvassed, and they agreed to surrender cheerfully the outward state in which they had lived, and show him that

with them happiness was not dependent on brilliant display. A pleasant domestic home they would now endeavor to make for him, embellished by their own talents and accomplishments.

*at the moment of this scene*  
Their true friends they would yet be able to receive, and many attractions would Wavertree still possess for the cultivated and the intellectual, though the outward glitter of prosperity would no longer allure the mere worldly seeker after pleasure.

## CHAPTER XIII.

FAR different were the feelings of Victor when informed of the change in his father's fortunes. He knew and felt it to be a death-blow to his hope of calling Louise his bride, for he felt the assurance in his own heart that Mrs. Ruskin would never bestow the hand of her beautiful daughter on any man who could not afford to place her in a brilliant home of her own.

The beau-ideal of life to both himself and Louise, was to possess a sufficient income to enable them to live in New Orleans, in a style of elegance suited to their extravagant tastes. Hitherto, he had not doubted for a moment that on his marriage his father would double his munificent allowance; thus securing him leisure to follow every fashionable folly that might attract him.

In place of this, he found with dismay that he must relinquish the greater portion of what he had hitherto controlled, until his father had worked himself out of the debts that had accumulated against him. What remained to him seemed actual poverty to one who never denied himself any gratification that money could purchase.

In addition to this, an appalling list of debts arose before his mind, recklessly incurred, in the belief that the resources



of his father were inexhaustible, and would be readily applied to their liquidation. Now, Mr. Harrington was not likely to possess the means of so doing very soon, and Victor knew that at the first rumor of a change in fortune, his creditors would become clamorous for payment.

Altogether, Victor was as unhappy as a selfish and thoroughly spoiled young man could be, under such untoward circumstances. At the first whisper of financial difficulties, Mrs. Ruskin seemed to grow harder and colder than ever, and her manner to her unhappy nephew became almost scornful. The eyes of Louise several times betrayed that she had wept bitterly, but even in her manner there was a decided change. Her usual wild spirits seemed to have settled down into a quiet apathy that afforded no clew to her true feelings. It was quite evident to Victor that she had decided to be governed by her mother; he knew this rendered her unhappy, but he could gain from her no positive hope for the future. She would give him no pledge to refuse such proposals as might be offered her in the years that must now inevitably elapse before they could be united.

Louise insisted that she must retain perfect freedom of action, untrammelled by an engagement that might, after all, never end in marriage; and Victor reproached her with bitterness for her want of faith to one to whom she had pledged herself in prosperity.

In the midst of this scene, her mother came in, and her manner showed that she had heard much that had passed. She seated herself, and said in her haughtiest tones,

“It seems to me, nephew, that in place of seeking an inter-

view with my daughter, for the purpose of inducing her to act directly contrary to my wishes, it would have better become a man of honor to relinquish such hopes as past encouragement has given birth to."

"You sanctioned those hopes yourself, madame," said Victor, passionately. "You give your daughter a fine lesson of truth and probity, when you speak thus to her betrothed husband."

"No, Victor, not betrothed, because my consent had neither been asked, nor given."

"It has been tacitly granted, madame; and my whole family hold you as much bound by it as I do."

"It matters little to me what they may think," replied Mrs. Ruskin, with heightened color. "I am the guardian of my daughter's interests and happiness, and—"

Victor impetuously interrupted her,

"Her happiness, do you say? No—no—interest alone is the word to use there, for you as ruthlessly trample on happiness as if hearts are of no more worth than the earth on which you walk."

"Interest let it be, then," was the frigid rejoinder. "And to such a butterfly as Louise, it is of the last importance that even interest shall be considered. She must marry in such a manner as to secure her the means of living according to her tastes, or she will be miserable, and render her husband so too. I ask you if it is fair, to ask a young girl, just setting out in life, with such advantages as Louise possesses, to forego the enjoyments of her age, and settle down in a quiet country house, with an invalid father, of broken spirits and fortunes,

and an elderly woman, who will look on her childish follies as serious faults?"

"My aunt would never do this, for she has soul and heart; and where are my sisters? Will they not make agreeable and suitable companions for my wife?"

"They will marry, themselves; the sooner, perhaps, since times are changed, and the gay life they have been accustomed to lead is now ended forever."

"You speak unadvisedly, madame. My father's fortune only suffers under a temporary eclipse. At no very distant day, he will resume his old style of living."

"You are mistaken, nephew. A man who has received such a lesson as your father is taking to heart even now, is likely to profit by it. Besides, there is an old adage that 'misfortunes never come single;' hitherto your father has been a very fortunate man, but now the tide has turned, and no one can tell whither it may bear him."

Victor grew pale; after a silent struggle, he said,

"I see, madame, that you have canvassed every contingency in your own mind, and it is useless to attempt to move you—but I warn you that you hold a human destiny in your hands. I love Louise as I shall never love another, and if I become a loathing and a curse to myself—a disgrace to my family, you will be responsible for it. To you will be traced my ruin."

Mrs. Ruskin scornfully retorted,

"Pooh! are you a man, and use such stupid words? Say rather to your own weakness and want of purpose in life, will your ruin be due. Such threats move me not."

"I know it," he bitterly answered. "Nothing moves you. I know that I am weak—I feel it; and so much the greater should be your dread of driving me to desperation, if you possessed the sensibility of your sex."

During this colloquy, Louise had sat with her hands clasped over her face. At this juncture she arose, and taking Victor's hand, she pleadingly said,

"Mother, we are both very young. Let us wait. Let us see the result of my uncle's efforts to reinstate himself. In four years I shall only be twenty. I will obey your will so far as not to pledge myself formally to Victor. Only suffer things to remain as they are, and all may come out right."

Victor's words and his wild manner had made some impression on his aunt, in spite of her scornful reception of them. Mr. Harrington had been uniformly kind to herself and her orphan children, and Mrs. Ruskin felt that she scarcely dared to drive his only son to extremity. After a pause for reflection, she ungraciously said,

"I will consent, then, that, for one year, this silly love affair may drag along; and at the end of that time, in my opinion, you will both be heartily tired of it. If you are constant, and affairs go smoothly with my brother, I will consider the engagement as binding. But to this I attach one imperative condition—"

"What is that?" asked Victor, apprehensively.

"That you immediately undertake some employment by which you can earn your own living and become independent of your father."

The thanks that trembled on the lips of the young man for the concession they had gained, were arrested by these words. He presently stammered,

"Do you mean that I shall learn to work, ma'am?"

"Precisely. Is that any thing surprising? Did not God say of all the sons of Adam that they should gain their own bread by the sweat of the brow? Pray what entitles you to be exempted from the common lot?"

"Because—I—I—really know of nothing for which I am fitted," he candidly responded.

Mrs. Ruskin smiled grimly.

"The more shame to you that it is so. I suppose then, if poverty actually should assail you, you will belong to that pitiable class who are 'too proud to beg, to dig they are ashamed,' a fragment of poetry which Meanness and Laziness have quoted innumerable times to shelter themselves from the odium they deserve. What does it mean? That you must violate God's law, and commit suicide, to escape from laboring for the support of the life he has given you? Or must you steal, to save your delicate sensibility from the shock of asking for what would sustain you?"

She had talked herself into something like vehemence, and when she paused to take breath, Victor feebly said,

"Really, aunt, you express yourself in the most extraordinary manner. I suppose if I must work, there will be enough to do here in assisting my father to manage this place."

"Your father has an efficient overseer, and if you were to take his place, I fancy his crops would not be benefited

thereby," she dryly said. "No—you are only fit for a mercantile life, and I shall advise that your father shall send you to New Orleans to learn book-keeping. You can get a clerkship with his merchant, who, I dare say, would not be too hard on so useless a young gentleman as you confess yourself to be, before you have time to learn something of business."

"I can not see the necessity of such extreme measures," faltered poor Victor. "My father is not absolutely ruined, and he can still afford me what many young men would consider a handsome allowance."

"Your allowance is more than sufficient, in my opinion, if your own wants were the only claims on it. Can you not see the necessity of laying aside the greater portion of it, in imitation of your father, to pay your debts?"

Victor grew crimson, and then pale beneath the searching glance that rested on him. He was too much confused to summon words for an immediate reply, and she went on—

"You surely would not thrust this responsibility on your father in addition to all he has to bear beside?"

Victor by this time recovered a little composure, and he asked,

"How do you know that such debts are in existence ma'am? My allowance has hitherto been very liberal."

"So much the greater shame to you that you have exceeded it. I *know* that debts exist, and moreover, that they are such as the world miscalls debts of honor, incurred at the gambling table, and on the race-course."

Victor assumed a little spirit—

"It is useless to taunt me with what all others of my caste practice, ma'am. I will think of what you have said—"

"And decide as I wish, or I retract even the partial consent I have given to the tacit engagement you desire. Some nation I have read of, required the lovers of their daughters, however wealthy, or high in station, to learn some handicraft by which they could gain a subsistence, in the event of a reverse of fortune; in a country like ours, where fortunes are lost and won with magical celerity, I think it is an example that should be followed. Show that you can exert the energy to make a living, and I shall no longer withhold my consent to your union with Louise."

The young girl softly whispered,

"For my sake, Victor, promise any thing"—and the poor victimized young man looked into her face, and replied in the same subdued tone,

"For you, I can bear every thing, Louise. Besides, if I go to New Orleans, I shall be near you, and can see you often."

This was the only gleam of consolation to him, and after parting from his aunt and cousin, he strolled into his father's room, looking as gloomy as possible.

This was the third day from Mr. Harrington's attack, and he was able to sit up in a large invalid chair. He was still pallid from loss of blood, but he looked animated, and almost cheerful. Miss Gertrude, with her work table, was seated on one side of the fire, and on a low seat beside her father sat Adèle, reading aloud the "Pilgrim's Progress." Mr. Harrington called this his sick book, because when he was indisposed he never desired to hear any thing beside that and the

Bible read to him. His room was decorated with engravings illustrating the various scenes in the Pilgrim's trials, and over the mantel hung a beautiful painting representing Mercy's dream.

As her brother entered, Adèle laid aside her book, and looking anxiously at him, said,

"You are not well, Victor. Take care, or we shall have you to nurse as well as father."

"Nothing is the matter with my health," responded the young man, moodily, as he threw himself carelessly on a seat, and stretched his feet toward the fire. "I am only wearied with the silly exactions of my aunt. She must think that we live in the age of the patriarchs, when it was the fashion for men to labor seven years for their wives before obtaining them."

His father half smiled,

"If such is her present demand, my son, I am afraid I shall never call Louise daughter. I should be glad, however, if love for her would stimulate you to exertion of any kind. It is not good for any young man to lead a life of indolent self-indulgence, such as yours has been since your return from college."

"*Et tu, Brute,*" muttered Victor, sullenly, and then he spoke aloud. "I scarcely expected you to take sides with Mrs. Ruskin, sir; though I have consented to what surprises myself."

"What does my sister desire?" anxiously inquired Mr. Harrington.

"That I shall go to New Orleans, and seek a clerkship



with Messrs. Hall, with a view of learning how to make my own living."

His father reflected a few moments, and then said,

"I am quite willing. I commenced life as a merchant's clerk, myself, and my son should not disdain to begin as his father did. A wide and varied field of information is open to men of that class, especially in a city like our southern emporium. Remember that the merchants of Italy were also her princes, and that it does not necessarily follow that a man is mercenary or narrow-minded, because he follows such a calling. I can point out to you my own commission merchant as an example of what the influence of our institutions, and a fine original nature combined, may produce. Mr. Hall went to New Orleans, poor and unknown; by his own energy he has amassed a very large fortune, and besides many acts of liberality in his business transactions, his annual charities are said to amount to not less than thirty thousand dollars. Think what an honor it would be to emulate the career of such a man."

"True—but he was old and gray-haired before he possessed the means of enjoying life. Then, its zest had departed," replied Victor, discontentedly.

"He labored in the morning of life, my son, that his noon and evening might be happy and honored. He had a purpose in view which he nobly accomplished. Think how much better is such an existence, than that of him who makes pleasure alone his pursuit."

"Ah, sir, you can preach very well, but such has not been

your practice. I know of no one who has taken his own ease more than you have done."

"Victor," said his Aunt Gertrude, gravely, "you take a great liberty when you speak thus to your father."

"Let the boy say what he thinks, sister. His reproach touches me a little, I confess; but you must remember this, Victor, that I made my own fortune before I thought of enjoying ease; and neither is it absolute idleness to keep every thing in order on a plantation like this. When you have won for yourself what will purchase a third of its value, I shall consider you entitled to take to yourself the *otium cum dignitate*."

"Very likely, sir; but I am afraid I shall be as old as Methuselah before I could, by my own exertions, acquire so much."

"Never despair, my boy. The thought of labor to which we have been unaccustomed is discouraging to the mind; but when once disciplined to it, both interest and occupation are found in details that were once repulsive. Does Mrs. Ruskin wish you to be united to Louise, and live with her instead of at Wavertree?"

"Heaven defend me from such a proposition! I am afraid I should consider even Louise a hard bargain on such terms. No, sir—she insists that the marriage shall be deferred until I have proved my capacity to take care of a wife."

"I can not think that she is very far wrong, Victor. A mother risks a great deal in giving her daughter to a thriftless young man of fashion, who only knows the value of

money by calculating how many indulgences it will purchase for him. Prove your devotion to Louise by winning for yourself the reputation of an industrious, steady young man. Believe me, you will be the gainer both in happiness and respectability."

This reasoning might be very convincing, but it was not very consoling to one who had never before given a thought to the necessity of providing for his own wants; and in the deep heart of Victor, lurked the unexpressed conviction that he was one of that unhappy class who do not possess the requisite strength to struggle against difficulties and overcome them. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel," came to his mind as a prophecy, and his weak soul almost fainted within him at the thought of the untried path before him. He arose and said,

"I will think of all you have said, sir, and in the meantime I will thank you to write to Mr. Hall and ascertain if there is an opening in his establishment for me."

"I will, my dear boy; and may Heaven bless you for so readily accommodating yourself to the change in our circumstances. It will, I truly believe, be an advantage to you to try your fortune in the great warfare of life. I possess the power to place you advantageously, and I need scarcely say it will be fully used for your benefit."

"Thank you, sir; I will endeavor to be as grateful to you as I should; but I believe, if the truth must be told, no son ever went forth from his father's roof more unwillingly to try his fortune than I do. In the end I may prove victor, but I am sadly afraid I shall lose all in the race."

"Do not cherish such despondent feelings, my son. Remember that Louise is to be your reward."

"I do remember that, sir, or I should never have courage to make the attempt."

"I have great hopes for you, Victor, if you cherish such love for your betrothed. It is a holy and noble motive; one that I believe will bring energy and comfort to you in many a dark hour, and secure success at the last."

"I trust so, though I have many dark misgivings myself," rejoined the discontented young man; and he left the room, wearing a brow of gloom, which even the sight of Louise in the yard did not remove. He joined her, and they walked together the remainder of the afternoon, discussing their future plans in a mood that was far from resigned to the change in their prospects.

Louise was too wayward and too uncertain of her own constancy, to give much consolation to her lover; and Victor bitterly felt that to cling to a belief in her truth, was like the frail straw on which the drowning man clasps his frantic hold; yet so weakly infatuated was he, that he could not relinquish even that.

## CHAPTER XIV.

MALCOLM found the business he had undertaken to manage was in a much more complicated condition than he expected. The abduction of Withers' accounts caused inevitable losses to himself, for the murdered man had long been his trusted agent, in his frequent absences from the city.

Week after week rolled by, and he was still detained in New Orleans, though he frequently wrote to the inmates of Wavertree, and always in such a manner as to induce the deluded Pauline to believe that his chief anxiety was to return on her account; though he did not actually commit himself.

Malcolm sought an early interview with Messrs. Hall and informed them of the transfer Mr. Harrington wished made, and also of his own readiness to pay over to them negotiable paper for the sum recently advanced by them. They manifested some surprise at this, and the senior partner inquired,

"Do you advance the whole of this sum yourself, Mr. Malcolm?"

"Yes, sir. I have extensive business relations with Mr. Harrington, and he finds it more convenient to suffer me to hold the mortgage; especially, as I may soon stand in such a

position toward him as to render it to our mutual interest to clear the place of debt as soon as possible."

"Hem—that alters the case, certainly, and we are glad to get back this large advance so soon. But what guaranty do you offer that the older claims we hold against Mr. Harrington shall be liquidated?"

"I am also authorized by him to pledge to you the sum of six thousand dollars annually from his crops, until the whole is paid."

"I hope Mr. Harrington does not think we would have proved hard creditors? I know Charlie Harrington of old, and a more liberal heart never beat in a man's bosom. He is among the last that I should feel inclined to be hard with."

"I believe he fully understands that: but he wishes earnestly to clear himself of debt as soon as practicable; and there is a family arrangement between us which enables me to assist him efficiently."

He half smiled, and Mr. Hall said,

"I may congratulate you then, on a more favorable fate than has befallen many others. The fair sisters of Wavertree have often been wooed, but this is the first hint I have heard that either one has been won. May I ask which is—"

At that moment a clerk came in with a communication of importance for the chief, and to the infinite relief of Malcolm, he turned his attention to it at once. It would have been rather embarrassing to reply to the query Mr. Hall was about to utter, as there was as yet no positive certainty that either sister would ever be his wife.

When the merchant had despatched the business, he turned

with his mercantile air to Malcolm, evidently oblivious of every thing save the matter in hand. He said briefly,

"I consent to the transfer you propose, Mr. Malcolm, since it is the wish of Mr. Harrington. We will be ready at any time to go through with the details necessary to complete it."

Malcolm named an hour on the following morning for a final settlement, well pleased with the result of the interview. From there he proceeded to the office of one of the principal papers in the city in which he had caused an advertisement to be inserted to the effect that if the person who possessed the accounts of the murdered Withers, would cause them to be left at that office, all further inquiry into the affair would be dropped.

As the police had utterly failed to obtain a clew to that mysterious assassination, Malcolm believed that the offer might produce what he desired, and as he seemed likely to be the chief sufferer from the heavy robbery then committed, considered himself at liberty to quash the proceedings which promised no effectual result.

On entering the sanctum of the editor, he found him seated at his table with a voluminous package before him which he was preparing to open. He nodded toward a seat, as he said,

"See what we poor devils of editors have to undergo. Here is a correspondent, now, who must think we have an immense amount of spare time, and more patience than even fel' to the lot of Job, to wade through such a mass of matter as is here."

"I only wish it would prove what I am so anxious to gain,"

replied Malcolm; "I would gladly undergo the labor of looking over every page."

"Yes, they would repay you, but in all likelihood I shall only have the trouble without any profit. 'Tis not every article that comes to a publisher's sanctum that is worth the carriage."

While he thus spoke, he cut the strings and broke the seals of the package. The contents scattered over the table, and Malcolm started up, exclaiming,

"By Jove! there is a paper bearing in large letters, 'For Edward Malcolm, Esq.' They are mine, they are the accounts of that unfortunate wretch, Withers, for which I advertised."

"Very true," replied the other, "and several of them bear the marks of bloody fingers, as if wet with the blood yet warm from the heart of the murdered man. Pah! take them away."

Malcolm hastily gathered them up, and examined them with sparkling eyes. Not one in which he was interested was missing; but among them were several that puzzled him; for well as he had known Withers, he had not been aware that he had a daughter. There were bills for tuition and clothing, dated so recently that he concluded the child must still be at the same school.

He immediately took an omnibus for the lower part of the city, and was soon set down at the corner nearest to Madame S——'s seminary for young ladies. On ringing, he was immediately ushered into the presence of the principal, a small, dark woman, of bustling manner, and sharp voice. She re-



ceived him with great politeness, and inquired if he wished to place a new pupil with her.

"No, madame," he replied; "my business rather is to see an old pupil of yours. Is Mademoiselle Withers still with you?"

"Ah! bon Dieu!" exclaimed the excitable woman. "Is it to see Mademoiselle Withers you really came, monsieur? I am afraid she will not soon again be seen by any of her friends."

"What do you mean, madame? Is the little girl no longer with you?"

"No, monsieur; and it is a great mystery what has become of her. She left here to go into the country with her father the day he was killed, and since then she has never been heard of."

"You amaze me, ma'am. Have you caused diligent inquiry to be made after her?"

"O yes. My teacher of drawing, who was fond of the little brown creature, went to the house herself when we saw the account of the terrible murder in the papers; but all her inquiries only elicited the fact that her father had taken her away in a carriage soon after she reached his residence."

"Could not the number of the carriage be ascertained? A clew might thus have been furnished."

"No, sir—we lost all trace of her there; and as we could not afford to go to any expense about it, we concluded to let the matter drop."

"And the child's fate is still a mystery?"

"Yes, monsieur—so far as we are concerned, a profound one. Are you a relative?"

"No. Only a friend of her deceased father. I have been absent from town, and after my return I thought it right to look after the little girl."

"Very true, monsieur. I am sorry I can afford you no information. I shall be very glad to know what has become of her myself, for she was a quiet, obedient pupil."

Completely mystified himself as to why the child was removed at such a crisis, Malcolm took his leave, and slowly walked toward the busier portion of the city.

It was late when he regained his own apartments; and he shut himself up with the papers of the dead man, to examine them thoroughly, hoping thus to gain a clew to the probable whereabouts of his daughter. Withers possessed an interest in some of their joint speculations, which, in the event of success, would probably amount to a few thousand dollars, and he felt it to be only just that his child should be sought out, and receive the benefit of them.

Though Malcolm wove his nets so skillfully around unsuspecting Mr. Harrington, to get him completely in his power, for the accomplishment of his own ulterior objects, he was neither grasping nor dishonest; and he would have been unwilling to possess himself of this property to which a helpless minor had a claim.

As he scanned the various memoranda, his brow grew dark, and more than once muttered exclamations escaped him. At length the book which Withers had looked over with so much interest on the morning before his assassination, fell

into his hands, and with amazement he read such proofs as convinced him that his trustworthy agent had long meditated an extensive fraud of which he himself might have become the ultimate victim, had not the large sum of money thrown into his hands proved a temptation too great to be resisted. From the moment this belief was settled in his mind, Malcolm sought among the papers for further proof. A card presently came up with the name of the ship *Euterpe* on it, and also the landing opposite to which she lay, apparently intended as a direction for a trunk.

The certificate of the investment of stocks in the name of Charles Hamilton was missing. The robbers had appropriated that, but the name occurred several times, scribbled on some of the papers, apparently in a fit of absence of mind.

Malcolm was an acute reasoner and a keen observer. He carefully placed all these facts together, and then sought for the newspapers which had accumulated in his absence. They had been carefully filed by his servant, and, on turning to the date of Withers' death, he looked down the list of shipping, and found among the vessels cleared on that day, the *Euterpe*, bound for Havre. His rapid mind came to the accurate conclusion that on this ship Withers had placed his daughter, together with Mr. Harrington's money, intending to sail in her himself; that he was forced to return to arrange other business, and met his fate.

On the return of the *Euterpe* he would make such inquiries as must lead to the knowledge of what he desired to ascertain. We may as well mention here that on the arrival of

the *Euterpe* in port, Malcolm visited her; ascertained that his suspicions were correct, and carefully noted down the name of Grace Withers' protectress, together with the feigned name by which Withers had registered himself and his daughter. He could gain no certainty concerning the money, and it was still doubtful whether it had been transferred to the vessel with his daughter, or whether it had fallen a prey to the robbers.

All these facts Malcolm kept carefully to himself. He did not wish to furnish a hint to Mr. Harrington by which he might eventually recover his property. Should Adèle prove propitious to his suit, when she was once his own, he could follow the clew thus ingeniously obtained, and possibly regain the money.

He wished to obtain the entire control of Mr. Harrington's affairs, and with the implicit confidence reposed in him, nothing seemed easier than to do so, especially if the old adage should with him prove true, that "misfortunes never come single." With sanguine expectation Mr. Harrington looked upon the future as certain to release him from this temporary embarrassment—the chances of failure in his crops, or any other casualty which could affect his ability to fulfill his engagements, had scarcely entered into his calculations at all; but the more astute mind of Malcolm contemplated all these possibilities, and he felt that each one added a new link to the chain he had so subtly woven around him.

Their joint speculations were in Malcolm's name, and should Adèle finally refuse his offered hand in spite of the influences brought to bear their evil weight upon the fortunes

of her family, he could retain a sufficient portion of their proceeds to indemnify himself for the advance he had made. Thus responsible to no one save God and his own conscience, Malcolm possessed the power to bring ruin and desolation into a family which so lately was prosperous, united, and happy.

If the schemer felt remorse, it was silenced by the thought that Adèle could avert the threatened ruin: could render him an efficient co-worker with her father, if she would only speak the magic words that would bind her to him forever. If she refused, let the misfortunes of those she loved come to her as a life-long reproach; selfish and hard of heart must that daughter be who could refuse to rescue her family from ruin even by the sacrifice he demanded. Should Adèle prove thus obdurate, let desolation come to their once happy home: let them sink into the oblivion of poverty.

What cared he? He could so manage as to avert reproach from his own name, and the hollow world would still smile upon the prosperous and fascinating speculator, as before. Malcolm believed that should this disappointment indeed be his, it would seal up the only human spot in his heart. Henceforth, with the flowers of life withered, he would, like a second Midas, turn all he touched to gold, and in time, become himself as hard and impassive as the metal itself.

While he thus mused with bent brows, and writhing lips, a knock came to his door, and without troubling himself to rise, he said,

"Come in."

The door was opened with a jerk, and Nevin entered with a careless, familiar air.

"Found you at last, old fellow," he said, as he threw himself full length on two chairs. "Where on earth have you been keeping yourself this age? I have seen you in none of our usual haunts, for many days past."

"I have been busy—you know I have recovered the accounts I was so anxious about, and they have given me a great deal to attend to."

"Ah yes; don't speak of them. It gives me the blues to talk of murdered men's affairs. By the way do you know that Madame Stiff and her daughter have returned to the city?"

"Who do you mean?"

"Why the Ruskins to be sure. Don't you know the dutiful Louise bestows that very appropriate name on her stately mamma?"

"Mrs. Ruskin is then in town?" asked Malcolm with some anxiety. "When did she come down, and why did I not hear from Wavertree by her?"

"Because there was nobody to write, I suppose. Pauline was slightly indisposed. Mr. Harrington is about again, but very busy with his plantation affairs; anxious about the amount of his crops, I fancy. It is well for some men to have a little care thrust on them sometimes, and he has enjoyed the *dolce far niente* long enough in all conscience."

"Pooh! you're only envious, Nevin. And the rest of the family? What of them?"

"I do not suppose that you are particularly interested in

the dandy exquisite, but I really must tell you something new of him. He has actually made up his mind to do something useful, and he has come hither to enter Messrs. Halls' commission house as a clerk. An efficient one he is likely to prove. I wish his employers joy in their acquisition—don't you?"

"That is something unexpected. What motive prompted him to it. Can you imagine?"

"Love for Louise Ruskin, I fancy; for the little gipsy told me that her mother insisted on his learning some means of making his bread, or she would not permit him to address her daughter."

"Miss Ruskin must be very communicative," said Malcolm, contemptuously. "I do not fancy that Victor would be much flattered by this confidence."

"O as to that, I have known Louise all her life, and I can get any secret out of her that I wish to find out. I was half in love with her myself, before I saw that enchanting cousin of hers—and I don't know but I may end by being seriously involved yet. There is something wonderfully attractive to me in the gayety and beauty of this girl."

"You have only to speak, and the mother will be on your side. Money is evidently what Mrs. Ruskin seeks for her daughter, and you have enough of that. But I believe the girl herself likes Harrington."

"Pooh! it is only a childish flirtation on her side. *He* is serious enough, but that giddy child never yet had an earnest emotion in her life. I am only speculating now, however, for I have sometimes thought if this involvement of Mr. Har-

rington ends in ruin, the beauty may not prove so obdurate to a wooer who carries fortune in his hand, as she once was."

He fixed his eyes upon the face of Malcolm as he thus spoke, as if seeking to read his soul. The slight start he gave, and the sudden knitting of his brows, gave Nevin a clew to what he had earnestly desired to fathom. He uttered a forced laugh, as he added,

"Ah-h—I have found something that will move you at last. I never saw your face change under emotion before, Malcolm. Excuse me—but this is really too good."

Malcolm regarded him with chilling composure,

"I do not comprehend you. Will you be so kind as to explain your meaning?"

"O hang it! Put off that face, now. You and I know each other too well to practice that sort of humbug. I have only discovered what all our friends have been speculating about for weeks past; which one of the sisters has captivated you? The world says it is Pauline, but I say that Adèle has fascinated you as she does every one else; but you are too cautious to let others see it until you are sure of your ground."

"Your judgments are not always correct, Nevin," replied Malcolm, coldly, "and I beg that you will keep your surmises to yourself, as I do not wish my affairs canvassed by those who have no personal interest in them."

"Neither does any one else, but it is nevertheless done every day by our dear five hundred friends. By the way, when mentioning the rest of the family I forgot to say that Adèle's time is taken up with a new lover, and one who seems in a fair way to win where the rest of us have failed."



This time, Malcolm turned his head away, pretending to be searching for something, but really to avoid the scrutinizing gaze he felt was upon him. A pang of mortal jealousy wrung his proud heart, though he only half believed the assertion of Nevin. He carelessly said,

"This too, is a portion of Miss Louise Ruskin's information, I suppose?"

"No—Louise cares very little about any body's lovers but her own. Her mother told me of a young, interesting, and highly cultivated guest, who comes from Virginia on a visit to Wavertree. He is a distant connection of the family, and feeble health demanded a change of climate. Philip Evelyn has delicate lungs, and the vapor from the boiling sugar has been prescribed for his restoration."

Malcolm listened to these details with repressed eagerness. With assumed carelessness, he asked,

"And Adèle? What has she to do with this guest more than any other that has ever visited Wavertree?"

"Only that she seems more fascinated by this young man, than by any who has gone before. She walks with him—they read, together, books which he recommends to her perusal—in short, they seem quite charmed with each other's society."

"Did Mrs. Ruskin assert that from her own observation?"

"Yes, with her own facile tongue. She thought she was crushing my tender aspirations in that quarter, I know. But thank Heaven, I am no longer so verdant as to cherish any. You may win and wear her, if you can, Malcolm."

"Thank you; you are generous to give away that to which

you have no claim," was the sarcastic rejoinder. "It seems very absurd that a man of business like myself, can not visit Wavertree on matters of interest alone, without being involved, by common gossip, in a love affair with one or the other of the young ladies. You should be sufficiently a man of the world to know that, with us, love and love-making are only the interludes in existence, not its business."

Nevin listened skeptically.

"And you would really persuade me that you are not fascinated by either of those fair sisters? Well, I can play the blind friend, if it suits you, especially as I have no particular interest in fathoming your secrets."

He arose, and consulted his watch.

"It is nearly eight o'clock. I am going to call at Mrs. Ruskin's for the amiable purpose of making Harrington as jealous as Othello. It is real fun to flirt with such a girl as Louise—she plays into one's hand so finely, and enters so completely into the spirit of the thing. Won't you go?"

Malcolm muttered something that was not very intelligible, but after a moment's hesitation he took up his hat, and they went out together. A walk of a few squares brought them in front of an imposing looking city house, on the brass door-plate of which, in large letters, was the name of Mrs. Ruskin.

The visitors were promptly admitted, and received by that lady and her daughter with great cordiality. On their entrance, they found Louise seated at the piano, over which leaned Victor Harrington, watching the play of her white fingers, as they glanced over the ivory keys, and speculating

in rather a melancholy mood on the chances of ever becoming the possessor of the fair hand to which they belonged.

She sprang up with her characteristic vivacity, and began her usual lively chatter. Nevin answered her in her own strain, and soon the moody Victor, with savage heart, and watchful eyes, beheld his best-loved cousin Louise apparently charmed by the flattery her visitor contrived to mingle with his trifling. Once the unhappy lover ventured a whispered remonstrance in rather a fierce tone, but Louise cavalierly replied,

“Nonsense—you are so dull yourself that you make no effort to amuse me, and then get angry if any one else takes that trouble.”

Victor shrank away, and soon after took leave, an unhappy victim to anger and jealousy.

In the meantime, Malcolm devoted himself to Mrs. Ruskin, and, for his reward, obtained all the information from Wavertree that he desired.

There really was a young relative there on a visit, which would probably extend through the winter. Philip Evelyn was a cousin so distant that no other people except Virginians would think of claiming the relationship. In this case, however, there were ties of friendship which bound Mr. Harrington to his father in the days of his youth; and when he learned that Mr. Evelyn's most promising son was threatened with consumption, he cordially invited him to spend the winter in his family to try the benefit of a more southern climate.

Mrs. Ruskin, from motives of her own, went on to say that

from the first day of his arrival he had admired Adèle, and she showed more interest in his society than was at all usual with her. The delicacy of his appearance, probably, elicited her womanly sympathies, and, as before, Adèle might be fancy free; but of this Mrs. Ruskin had her doubts—her niece was not demonstrative, and her solicitude for the welfare of the invalid betrayed a great deal.

Malcolm listened with calm brow, and smiling lip, but rage was in his heart, when he bowed over her hand, and, with Nevin, took his departure. Why had he delayed his return to Wavertree so long? he asked himself. Why had he not put in his claims before another had won an interest in her heart? He would lose no more time—he would go at once and use his power to compel her to be his.

With this fixed determination he went home, to make preparations for an early departure.

The door had no sooner closed on her visitors, than Mrs. Ruskin sharply said,

“Louise, you certainly possess less judgment than any sane girl I ever met. Here you have flirted and talked nonsense with Mr. Nevin in the very presence of Mr. Malcolm, when you know my wishes in that quarter.”

“Set your heart at rest, ma, and spare your manœuvres, for that man of adamant is never going to seek such a little nobody as I am. I have more sense about some things than you give me credit for. My destiny lies between poor Victor and Mr. Nevin. One is desperately in love with me, and, if I choose, I can lead the other on to make a proposal; but I

will wait to see how my forlorn cousin comes out in his trial ; if he fails—and I am sure I hope the poor fellow will not, for I like him best of any of them—I think Mr. Nevin will suit me far better than this pompous Malcolm.”

Mrs. Ruskin ceased her reproaches, and, for once, she thought Louise less giddy than usual. Nevin was of a good family, and independent in fortune, with large expectations from a wealthy aunt who lived on the coast.

Considering all the chances against success in her attempt to secure Malcolm for a son-in-law, she thought it would be as well, perhaps, to permit her daughter to have her own way. So, for that evening at least, Louise escaped the usual lecture, which she was in the habit of yawning through and forgetting as soon as it was uttered.

Louise thought of Victor's angry face, and felt some compunction, but she consoled herself with the belief that she could soon make him forget it all, by bestowing on him a few sweet smiles and tender words.

## CHAPTER XV.

THE winter proved remarkably mild, and the open weather allowed the sugar-making to go on at Wavertree with unusual success. Mr. Harrington rejoiced in the prospect of making a larger crop than usual, for the thought of the load of debt that encumbered him lay as an incubus upon his usually buoyant spirit. He bitterly reproached himself with the change in the prospects of his children, caused, as he felt, by his own imprudence ; and the disappointment to Victor's matrimonial expectations lay nearer his heart than any one supposed.

He feared for the result to his son, for he apprehended that with Victor's peculiar character, a disappointment of this nature might lead to the most deplorable consequences. Instead of gaining strength from the blow, there was every reason to fear he would be crushed by it.

Mr. Harrington's health was apparently restored, though there was less of the florid hue of health which had so lately distinguished his appearance. Where the ruby blood once glowed upon his cheek, a tinge of deeper purple was now seen, as if the vessels in the skin were too full ; an occasional vertigo warned him that all was not right with him.

"I must put my house in order," was his frequent thought

—"if I die with my affairs so much deranged, my children may be impoverished."

These reflections stimulated him to a feverish activity that was far from beneficial to him, and after all, he felt how little could be accomplished in comparison with what he wished done. To Malcolm's return he looked with trustful interest. Firmly impressed with the belief in his attachment to Pauline, he would give her to him without delay, and thus provide a protector for both his daughters, in a man of energy who, should Heaven summon him away, could manage his estate to the best advantage, and in time restore it to his children, freed from debt.

It cost him many severe struggles to lay aside his habits of general hospitality, but a sense of the higher duty he owed, enabled him to accomplish even this; and the elegant dinners, and social reunions for which Wavertree had long been noted, were discontinued. They still received their friends in a quiet way, and entertained them as agreeably, though less sumptuously, than in days of yore.

To Miss Harrington and her nieces this change would have been welcome, but for its cause. The constant tide of company had so greatly occupied each one, that their own peculiar tastes were, in a measure, compelled to lie dormant, while they gave up so large a portion of their time to the exactions of hospitality. Pauline devoted herself more assiduously than ever to the cultivation of her musical abilities, and Adèle found an interest in books which they had never before possessed; while Miss Gertrude looked after her house-

keeping, and attended to the comfort of her brother with most assiduous care.

One permanent guest was received for the winter, and that was the Philip Evelyn of whom Mrs. Ruskin had made Malcolm so jealous. He had been invited to Wavertree before misfortune darkened over its roof; but under any circumstances this young man would have been welcomed warmly to Mr. Harrington's house. His father had been one of the friends of his boyhood, to whom he had been indebted for valuable aid at his first start in life. To such men favors once rendered appeal with powerful force throughout existence; and Philip Evelyn came to the heart and home of Mr. Harrington, not as the son of a distant kinsman, but with the cordial reception his own child would have received.

A violent injury to his breast, occasioned by a fall from his horse, had produced symptoms of consumption, and it was hoped that change of climate, aided by breathing the vapor from the sugar-house a short time every day, would restore him to his usual health.

Philip Evelyn was slender and delicate in appearance, and if Malcolm had seen him, he would probably, at the first glance, have thought he had little cause to fear a rival whose personal pretensions were certainly far inferior to his own, but after talking with him—after seeing those delicate features lighted up with the spiritual fire within—hearing the tones of a voice as clear and musical as the chime of silver bells, uttering words that charmed by their eloquence, he would probably have changed his opinion. Evelyn was not a man of action and enterprise, such as Malcolm; he was a



man of thought—of scientific and intellectual tastes—sometimes a dreamer, but also a worker; he had been a hard student; was a good practical engineer, and a fine draughtsman.

He was received into the family circle as one of themselves, and soon felt as perfectly domesticated as if he had been in his own home. He had been accustomed to the society of cultivated women, and enjoyed it. His mother and sisters were very dear to him, and from them he had formed a very high estimate of the sex. Such men are always popular with women, and Miss Gertrude took him under her especial charge, while the sisters endeavored, as far as possible, to render Wavertree agreeable to him.

Like others, Evelyn admired the rare beauty of Adèle, but he was not captivated at first sight. He was not the sort of man to set an exaggerated value on mere personal attractions, and it was not until he saw indications of her true womanly character, that his heart acknowledged how lovely she really was. The great affection for her father which she unostentatiously betrayed, first won him to think of her as something more than beautiful; and this observation continued from day to day, made him soon think that at last he had found a being who came as near the ideal of the poets as it was possible for a real living woman to be.

His early indifference pleased Adèle more than the violent admiration she was accustomed to elicit; it seemed to her more natural, and to be founded on something better than a mere appreciation of a fine specimen of nature's handiwork; a species of admiration she only shared with a beautiful

flower, or any other object calculated to charm the eye. This kind of worship she disdained as an offering that lowered her far beneath her true level. To be valued for her real superiority was her earnest desire, and not for the adventitious charms which must lose their bloom in a few fleeting years.

On further acquaintance, Adèle found that the character of her mind harmonized wonderfully well with that of Evelyn; yet had any one hinted to either that a life-destiny was involved in this newly-awakened interest, they would both have denied the imputation at once.

The arrival of Evelyn was a great piece of good fortune to Mr. Harrington. His intelligent and active mind took a keen interest in the new field of observation opened to him. The bright weather enticed him to accompany his host in his daily rounds on the plantation, and his professional skill enabled him frequently to be of great use to him.

For several years past, the river had been unusually high, and the additional quantity of transpiration water imbibed by the soil, rendered it necessary to drain to a greater extent than before, to prevent the cane from suffering injury from the moisture. These miniature canals were surveyed by Evelyn, and with his assistance every thing placed in readiness to commence their construction so soon as the rush of sugar-making was over; for on a sugar plantation, every thing bends before the necessity of grinding the cane before it is injured by the frost.

Evelyn possessed that rare tact which enables persons to talk only when conversation is most welcome, and to say that

which is pleasing to the state of the listener's mind. A few rare mental organizations possess this species of magnetic sympathy, and a greater gift it is than beauty, genius, or power; for by its magic properties, it enables its possessor to throw new light upon fading hopes—to raise the sinking heart, and infuse energy into the faltering, doubting soul.

Day after day, Philip Evelyn rode out beside his old friend, and Mr. Harrington felt that he had been sent to him for a purpose. Deeply and unostentatiously pious, he often turned his conversation from the pressing worldly concerns which he saw were burdening the anxious mind of his companion, to "that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" and for a season, his eloquent words would cause all earthly cares to fade before the bright visions of the hereafter to which they gave birth.

Mr. Harrington had thought of all these things seriously; and he had been a constant reader of his Bible throughout life, but his faith was only that which he had imbibed from careful maternal instruction. He was merely a passive Christian, and to this consciousness he gradually awoke as he listened to the unobtrusive remarks of his young friend. Mr. Harrington was thus led to read books which treated on this subject, in his leisure hours, and to reflect deeply on their contents. The carking load of care, which had planted many new furrows on his brow, thus lost much of its bitterness. Persons of sanguine temperament above all others, must have something bright to look to in the future, whether it be of this world or the next; without it, they are in a slough of despond from which there is no escape.

The new ideas so unostentatiously opened to his overburdened mind carried with them inexpressible relief and satisfaction; and many hours, when he rode slowly forth in the bright winter sunshine, outwardly grave, his heart was rising in grateful thanks to Him who has made all visible things so beautiful that they carry a lesson of sublimity and reverence to the spirit, if they are viewed with the eye of faith and love.

Mr. Harrington soon learned to regard the messenger of good to himself with a strength of affection that rendered the idea of parting from him extremely painful; and he sought for some pretext for retaining him near him throughout the future. The only one that naturally suggested itself, was, to give him his favorite daughter, and thus claim the love of a son from Evelyn. He watched the slight indications of a mutually developing preference between the two with deep solicitude, though he was too delicate, as well as too anxious for the *dénouément* to betray his wishes in the slightest degree.

Thus weeks rolled away fraught with deeper peril to Malcolm's hopes, than even Pauline's preference for himself. She, poor girl, during his protracted absence, felt that sickness of the heart of which the poet has so truly sung. The bright vision of happiness that had made an abiding-place there gradually faded—faded until hope struggled with despair. She *would not* yield to the terrible conviction that him she so fervently loved was indifferent to her happiness—unworthy of a tender thought. Her imagination had invested Malcolm with every attribute of excellence, and her spirit had bowed

in heart-homage before that ideal goodness in which her own nature found so much that was congenial.

At first, Malcolm's letters kept up this delusion, but gradually their tone changed, as if he wished to prepare the way for the avowal of his true designs; but as the suspicion of his falseness to herself darkened over her mind, Pauline summoned all the pride of womanhood, all the shrinking reserve of her peculiar temperament, to aid her in concealing the deadly blow that had been dealt upon her heart. Others, not even those dearest to her, should know how keen were her sufferings; and she armed herself with endurance for her daily duties, and passed among her friends the same thoughtful considerate Pauline she had been before this bitter struggle came, to strengthen her perhaps, for the conflict with the trials which so rapidly approached the ruined family.

Pauline's manner had always been quiet, and even the affectionate eyes around her, did not detect the veiled suffering that often tortured her heart. She saw this, and it gave her strength to struggle on, but the very life of life seemed to herself to be perishing within her soul, never again to be revived.

In the midst of this, Mr. Harrington was summoned to New Orleans by his perfidious friend, to complete the last details of the business necessary to place him entirely in Malcolm's power. The latter wrote that his presence was imperatively necessary, and he forthwith prepared to go. He considerately proposed to make Pauline the companion of his journey, but she declined accompanying him, with the shrinking feeling that in so doing she would be intruding her

presence on one to whom it would be unwelcome. Mr. Harrington was surprised at this decision, and would have remonstrated, but she gave so many plausible reasons why it would be best to remain at home that he was silenced. He said,

"I only wished to contribute to your happiness, my child. If you think it best to stay at home, of course I will not insist on taking you with me, though your presence would afford happiness not alone to myself."

At this allusion the poor girl grew heart-sick. After a pause, to steady her voice, she asked,

"Will it be prying unwarrantably into your affairs, father, if I inquire into the nature of the business which takes you to New Orleans at present?"

"It is too complicated to explain to you, Pauline, and could do no good. I will only say, that God never created a more generous man than Malcolm. Without the assistance he has rendered me, I should now be in a labyrinth of difficulties from which I could scarcely find my way out."

"Has he really been so kind?" and a feeling of strange pleasure filled her sad heart, at hearing him she feared to trust thus praised by lips she loved. "I knew from Mr. Malcolm, himself, that he had aided you, but I was not aware that your obligations are so great. Yet—yet—O, father, do not think me presumptuous if I entreat you not to trust him too far. It is not well to place ourselves too much in the power of another."

"I know that well, my daughter; but necessity teaches us stern lessons sometimes. With me, just now, it is a question

of insolvency or assistance from Malcolm. I tell you this in confidence, however ; do not betray it to your aunt or sister. I shall swim through yet, and you have strength of mind to know and sympathize with my difficulties without annoying me by looking sorrowful. I can not bear grave faces about me, Pauline—you know how I have always promoted cheerfulness."

Her heart felt as if a cord of steel were drawn tightly around it, as he thus spoke, but she found courage to look up and smile.

"Thank you, dear father, for your confidence ; but pardon me, if I again ask you if there is no other means of settling your affairs open to you, than to place yourself so completely at the mercy of Mr. Malcolm ?"

"What would the child be at?" said Mr. Harrington, in a slightly irritated tone. "From whom can I with so much propriety accept assistance as from the man who expects to become my son-in-law? You must be aware of the nature of his hopes, Pauline, for he as good as told me you had sanctioned them."

"Did he indeed say that?" gasped Pauline, a flood of happiness and contrition pouring into her heart with magical swiftness. "Then indeed have I wronged him."

"Wronged him! Have you doubted him because he has not written a parcel of silly love-letters to you, telling you every week how much he adores you? Pooh! Malcolm has passed the age of sentimentality, and he eschews such nonsense ; but he loves you none the less for that, as I can testify

from his emotion when he spoke of his hope of becoming my son."

Pauline covered her face with her hands, to conceal her strong emotion. This sudden revulsion of feeling seemed almost more than she could bear; tears of delicious happiness streamed through her slender fingers, and her father drew her tenderly to his heart.

"My love, you must have inflicted much needless suffering upon yourself, to be thus moved by the assurance I have just given you. I did not before think that my Pauline possessed a suspicious temper."

"O, father," she whispered, "where so much is given, the heart aches for a fair return. Perhaps mine is inclined to be too exacting, but I must think it strange that Mr. Malcolm has written so differently of late."

"He is harassed with business, Pauline; and men in such circumstances forget the heart that in loneliness broods over even an apparent slight. Trust Malcolm, my child, for he is worthy, and I know he loves you well."

This repeated assurance gave comfort and certainty to the bruised heart, for how completely her father was himself deceived the young girl could not suspect, and her dream of love, brighter and warmer from its temporary eclipse, cast renewed sunshine upon her path.

Again Mr. Harrington urged her to accompany him, but she said, with a bright smile,

"He will return with you to Wavertree, dear father, and thus reassured, I can afford to wait. I would prefer to avoid even the appearance of seeking him."



"I believe you are right, my child. The daughters of my house are not used to play the part of wooer to a tardy lover; not that I mean to insinuate that of Malcolm, for he has been detained from you as much by his endeavors to serve me, as by his own affairs."

"For which service I will endeavor to repay him in the future," said Pauline, blushing brightly. "I owe him reparation for my unkind suspicions."

"Take heed that they find no place in your heart again, and thus double your crime against him," replied her father with a smile, as he turned away and busied himself with his preparations for departure.

## CHAPTER XVI.

PHILIP EVELYN sat in the shadow of the great tree, and read the "Lotus Eaters." It was one of those deliciously balmy days, in the very heart of winter, which are only known to a southern clime. The bright sun had warmed the air, until it came in gushes of dreamy softness to his cheek. The leaves of the old tree fluttered around him, and cast flickering shadows upon his page. In the distance, the wide fields of cane of a vivid green, spread away like an ocean of verdure, and the sparkling river went on its resistless way, an object of grandeur, and often of terror to the dwellers on its banks, who for many months of the year are only protected from destruction by the frail barrier of earth which human ingenuity has reared to restrain the eddying waters.

It was just the kind of day on which to read the dreamy pages of Tennyson, and the young man was exactly in the mood to enjoy them. The coloring of health again faintly tinged his cheek, and the irritating cough he had suffered from, was now heard only at rare intervals. His thoughtful eyes were occasionally lifted, and swept over the scene around him, as if the day were too bright to be forgotten, even in intellectual enjoyment. Then he would lean back against a curved branch that afforded a pleasant support, and dream

such a dream as only comes once to the human heart in all the freshness of that pristine time when our first parents dwelt within the garden of Eden.

It was but a dream, for his hopes had scarcely yet taken a tangible form, but it was only the more delicious from its very vagueness. Evelyn was yet in that stage of love in which passion has not usurped the empire of reason. He could say,

“Should such happiness be mine in the future, I shall be a better and a nobler man for such companionship;” and the doubt thus expressed, gave him no pain, for he scarcely knew as yet, the influence Adèle had really established over his feelings. The suspicion that another wished successfully to pluck this fair flower, was alone needed to show him all the depths of his own heart, and how absolutely she reigned there.

Presently a soft strain of music floated out upon the sunlit air, and he listened in charmed listlessness to the sweet voice of Pauline singing one of Malcolm's favorite songs. He had never heard her sing that one before, and he marveled at the exceeding melody of that voice which sent up its joyful pæan of gratitude for renewed hope in every note of her sweetly modulated tones. It was the outgushing of a spirit released from a burden it had found almost too heavy to be borne; and more than one heart in that household felt that a shadow they had scarcely noticed while it lasted, was lifted from the heart and brow of their dearly cherished one.

Miss Harrington sat in her own room sewing, but the open doors permitted those charming tones to penetrate to her

sanctum, and she silently thanked the Giver of all that the clouded fortunes of her brother had caused no diminution of happiness in their household.

Adèle, in a long sun-bonnet, and a pair of gardening gloves, was at work among her flowers, and she too paused to listen to her sister's singing. It seemed as glad as the gush of song from the happy birds on a bright spring morning, and she thought,

"Pauline must feel more assured of Mr. Malcolm's constancy than of late; for she seemed to me to be rather depressed in spirits until my father left us. Can he have written more explicitly, and yet she would not tell me? O, sister mine, if you have played off such a cheat upon me, I will—let me see what I will do?—repay you in like manner, I suppose," and she blushed under her garden bonnet, though she would fain have persuaded herself that the increasing heat of the day caused the sudden flush that suffused her face.

She presently threw back her bonnet, and plucking a few monthly roses, came out into the open yard, crossed it, and seated herself on a rustic bench beneath a cluster of china trees.

From his perch in the oak, Evelyn's eye was caught by her fitting figure, and he followed it with a sudden fluttering of the heart which might have spoken volumes to him, had he paused to analyze its meaning; but he did not. The beautiful young girl was but an accessory to the picture which was stamping itself upon his memory in ineffaceable brightness.

There are days and scenes which are lived over again

years after they are numbered with the things that were. Scenes in which every gleam of sunlight—every fluttering shadow on the landscape, are as distinctly visible to the mental vision, as when they were actually beheld. When with these is mingled some delicious heart association, how vividly they return, carrying the gray head, the wearied spirit back to that golden time when Hope chanted her blithest song, and Joy was the offspring of her deceptive light.

Philip Evelyn was unconsciously daguerreotyping such a scene upon his memory, and he was annoyed when his delicious dream was broken by the dismounting of a gentleman at the gate with a package of letters and papers. It was one of the neighbors who had been to the village containing the post-office, and finding several letters there for the family at Wavertree, had volunteered to deliver them himself.

Seeing Adèle in the yard, he declined coming in, and after exchanging a few friendly words with her, he again mounted his steed and rode away. The young girl returned to the bench, and looked over the letters; she put aside two, and opened a third one which she read carelessly, and then tearing it in pieces, thrust them into the pocket of her dress. She did not attempt to open the papers, but sat as if absorbed in thought.

Evelyn speculated on her abstraction, and presently became restless. He was expecting letters from his own beloved home, and he felt certain that those which had been put aside were for him, or Adèle would herself have carried them in to her aunt or sister. She did not know where he was to be found, and, therefore, they were suffered to

lie idly beside her, until she was ready to go in the house herself.

With these thoughts in his mind, Tennyson lost his peculiar charm, and the book was closed. The dreamer awoke to the actual world around him, to which so many interests and hopes so strongly bound him, and with the activity of youth, he came down from his lofty station and lightly approached the unconscious Adèle.

"Sweet coz, I hope your dream has been as bright as mine, this charming day," he softly said.

Adèle started, colored slightly, and replied in the most matter-of-fact manner,

"Here are two letters for you, Cousin Philip. They will be welcome to you, I know, for they come from your home. I did not know that you were so near, or I should have sent them to you."

He took them as he said,

"You have not yet found out where I secrete myself, nor what marvels I have discovered by occupying a retreat so near and so unsuspected."

"You are welcome to all the information you may thus have gained; but if you had not avowed it, you are the last person I should have suspected of a prying disposition."

"Sometimes one may be interested in discovering whether the lovely outward seeming, is mated by as beautiful a spirit; but I assure you, I have used no underhand means to solve my doubts, for I have daily overlooked your proceedings, and found—"

"That I can scold sometimes," she laughingly interrupted. "Never imagine ladies altogether angels, Cousin Philip; for you may safely believe there is a touch of mother Eve in them all."

"I have a faint recollection that I *did* one day hear some exclamations about a flower, in which the gardener found some blame, but the tone in which they were uttered half disarmed them of their sting."

"I do not believe that such was the opinion of John; for he looked even blacker than is natural to him, and declared that my crushed japonica was no fault of his. You overlook us, you say; then I suppose you have found your way to the top of the old tree?"

"Yes—and a charming lounging-place it is. Whose idea was it to put such convenient seats amid its branches?"

"My father's, of course. Who ever thinks of as many agreeable things as he does?"

"Few indeed—for few persons cherish such kindly and benevolent feelings toward all others."

Adèle looked pleased at this just tribute to her beloved father. She said,

"Thank you; but you are forgetting your letters; I think one of them is from your mother. Here is room beside me. Sit there and read them; I wish to hear something more of those in whom you have so deeply interested me."

Evelyn obeyed, and some time passed in perusing two very long letters—one from his mother, and the other from his eldest sister.

Adèle's eyes wandered to his face as he bent slightly forward, oblivious of even her presence, as his heart went back to his boyhood's home, and, in-spirit, he was amid the family group, a sharer in all their joys and hopes. She watched the play of emotion upon his delicate features, and felt their power to express tender, noble, and manly feeling. She contrasted them, in her own mind, with the clearly cut and almost faultless profile of Malcolm, and thought how much Philip's gained by the comparison. Yet she believed she was simply appreciating the good points of her kinsman.

At length he looked up, with a bright gleam of pleasure illuminating his face.

"You have glad news?" she said.

"The very best," was the joyful reply. "My mother tells me that my sister Mary will be married very soon, to one to whom she has been betrothed several years. Hitherto, Mr. Groves has not been in circumstances to marry; but he has recently received the appointment of professor of languages in —— college, with a sufficient salary to enable him to do so; and Mary leaves her home as a bride, so soon as my renovated health will enable me to return to be present at the ceremony."

"Then I am of the opinion that she must defer her happiness some time yet; for you can not venture to leave our mild climate until the winter is fairly over."

Adèle spoke these words with a painful contraction of the heart, which gave her the first warning of its true condition.

"Yes—Mary is considerate about that herself. She tells



me she has assured her professor, that she can not name an earlier month than May for their union. I shall be quite restored by that time, and can leave with safety."

Adèle turned her faced toward the river, and gazed vaguely on the distant landscape. She thought Philip spoke very coldly of leaving those who had received him so kindly, but she would not have told him so for the world. Evelyn went on—

"This engagement has been one of long standing—for my father, with his large family, can not afford to bestow a portion on my sister, and Groves possessed too little himself, to render a marriage prudent without he could obtain some employment that afforded him a certain income. He is only qualified for the station he now fills; for he is a man of books, and is out of place in the busy world."

"I trust your sister may realize all the happiness for which she hopes," Adèle forced herself to say, as she paused. Philip was too much occupied with his own thoughts to remark the slight constraint in the tone of her voice. He went on—"Mary says they wish to establish a scientific department in connection with the college; and Groves thinks I am exactly qualified to fill the situation of principal. He will write to me in a few days himself, on the subject, and Mary says I can in the meantime reflect upon it myself."

"How does such a proposal please you?" she asked, doubtfully.

He reflected a moment, and then said,

"It offers the means of independence, which I should not hastily reject. I can no longer consent to be a burden to my

father, for he has very liberally educated me. The failure of my health, will, I fear, compel me to relinquish the profession I had chosen ; as the exposure to which a surveyor is liable may bring back the symptoms I suffered from when I came hither."

There was a pause, which Adèle broke by saying,

"How will my father bear to part from you, Cousin Philip ? He seems as much attached to you as if you were—"

She paused, crimsoned, and altered the intended form of her speech.

"I really think he will grieve over your departure more than over the change in his fortunes. I never before knew him to attach himself so strongly to a stranger, in so short a time."

"I have never felt as a stranger in your father's house, Adèle. He received me from the first as a son ; and as such, I sincerely love and reverence him."

At the word son, the consciousness of Adèle came to him. He looked at her, but her own emotion was controlled, and she seemed as placidly lovely as usual. He thought of his own limited resources, of the luxury in which she had been reared, and he felt that to suffer his dream to take a tangible form, would be a wrong to her. He had nothing to offer, save a true and honest affection ; and this he would not weigh against the wealth which might be hers, when this temporary embarrassment to her father's fortunes had passed away.

The first awakening pang came with this hard thought, and by its bitterness Evelyn knew how much he loved her.

To him the dreamy glory of the day was gone; he looked out on the still sunshine, felt upon his cheek the soft vernal breeze, but a change seemed to have fallen over them. The brightness was still there, but it was a hard, harsh glitter, that no longer harmonized with his own spirit; so strongly do sensitive natures give an expression and a coloring of their own to the outward influences that surround them.

Both sat absorbed in unpleasant reverie several moments, which neither would willingly have betrayed to the other. Adèle, then feeling the awkwardness of this silence, took up the volume of Tennyson which Philip had placed on the seat, and opened it.

"Are you an admirer of Tennyson?" she asked.

"In some moods of my mind his strains are charming to me; but I do not pretend to understand all he has written. There are mystic lines, that require interpreting as much as some of the involved sentences of Carlyle."

"I agree with you. I am sure it would puzzle the poet himself to explain what he sometimes means; but like yourself, I enjoy some of his writings intensely. Is he your favorite poet?"

"No—that distinction belongs to Shelley. Some of his pictures live in my mind like actual realities, and if I were an artist, I could paint them. He has written much that is objectionable; but there is a true conception of poetry in its highest sense, breathed through nearly all his productions. You feel, while reading them, that they are a portion of the man's soul that must find utterance. It was not mere intellectual power that made Shelley a poet, but the outgushing

of the inspired spirit that must be heard; he sang as the lark sings, without thought of the impression his music would make. That doubtless came as an after consideration, but in the fervor of composition, I do not believe he once referred to it."

After a slight pause, he asked,

"Who is your favorite poet? Which one among the mighty sons of song has found the warmest appreciation in your heart?"

Adèle smiled, as she replied,

"I feel a womanly pride in turning from the lordly list, and telling you that the truest poetry I have read, has been written by one of my own sex."

Philip looked a little disappointed. He said,

"By Mrs. Hemans, of course. She is justly a favorite with the lovers of the tender and the beautiful; but I looked for a different choice from you."

"No, it is not Mrs. Hemans. I admire her greatly, but she is not my ideal of what a highly intellectual woman can be, as an utterer of great truths."

"Mrs. Norton, then?" he asked. "Some of her strains are exquisite—or Miss Baillie? or—"

"Come nearer to our own time, and you will call the name of the woman who has astonished the intellectual world by her learning, and charmed the feeling one, by her wonderful gift of poesy."

"Ah, I should not have been so thoughtless as to omit the greatest among them all—Elizabeth Barrett Browning. All honor to her, I sincerely say, for she is a wonderfully gifted creature."

"You may indeed say so," said Adèle with enthusiasm. "Mrs. Browning has not only written things that appeal to the deepest and truest sympathies of the human heart, but she has given the world a poem which, in my opinion, deserves to be placed beside *Paradise Lost*, and she suffers not when brought in comparison even with Milton."

"You refer to the *Drama of Exile*. It is indeed an extraordinary production, and I must confess that it is far more readable than the voluminous pages of Milton."

"I think so; and her character of Eve is a more natural conception of our first mother, than the one delineated in *Paradise Lost*. She is truer to our ideal of the womanly nature. Shirley is right, when she insinuates that Milton did not comprehend the finer nature of woman."

"Rank heresy that, and rebellion against the long established superiority of my sex over yours, Miss Adèle Harrington. I can not permit such a depreciating comparison between the work of a feminine pen, and that of the great blind magician, whose darkness was peopled with visions more wonderful than are beheld by the keenest eyesight."

Adèle laughed at his mock heroic tone.

"You forget that this is the age of woman's rights—or rather the redressing of her wrongs. I need not take up arms in their defense, because my sex are proving themselves, in every way, quite capable of taking care of themselves."

"And are you really an advocate of these women's conventions?" asked Evelyn, seriously.

"Yes, if by such means only, right can assert itself.—No, if you think I would take a part in such a proceeding."

"If you think them necessary, why shrink from a duty?"

"It may be a necessity to those who suffer from the actual pressure of evils that legislation can correct. I can very well understand that as society is now constructed, a woman may be made too much the slave of a worthless or unprincipled husband. But I am so fortunate as to occupy a position that in a measure places me above the sufferings by which women among the medium and lower walks of life are often crushed. There is also another objection—they claim too much: they wish to step out of the sphere Nature has evidently allotted to them, and claim such privileges as would destroy the feminine qualities which are their greatest charm. They forget the beautiful words of Roger Ascham to Lady Jane Grey—'Women, like plants in woods, derive their softness and tenderness from the shade.'"

"Right, right, my wise little cousin. Your true instinct teaches you that; and I believe the most sensible among those who advocate their ultra claims, do so on the principle of asking a great deal more than will be conceded, that they may make sure of gaining the most important of their demands."

"Very likely. There rings the bell for lunch. It seems a great pity to leave the bright sunshine, but my aunt and Pauline are waiting for us."

Thus ended this morning's tête-à-tête, and both entered the house, with the conviction that the joy of life lay in the presence of the other.

## CHAPTER XVII.

AFTER an absence of a week, Mr. Harrington returned to Wavertree, accompanied by Malcolm. It was a bright evening when the packet landed, and the four he had left at home stood in a group upon the levee, to welcome them.

Malcolm glanced rapidly toward Philip Evelyn, as he approached the party, and at the first look, the refined and intellectual cast of the head seemed insignificant to one accustomed to believe his own striking style of person the beau-ideal of masculine beauty. That he was vain of his uncommon personal advantages, I do not mean to insinuate, for he was too proud of his superiority to most men in that respect, to be very vain of it. He had so long been accustomed to see others of his sex defer to his claims, that he rather contemptuously thought that it would be no difficult matter to cast his youthful rival in the shade.

Mr. Harrington seemed in buoyant spirits, and in better health than when he left home; and his joyous greeting to the members of the family infused a spirit of gladness among them all, as they entered the house, conversing cheerfully.

Malcolm, on meeting them, bowed deeply over the hand of each sister, but he scrupulously avoided meeting the eyes

of Pauline. Their power he dreaded as of old, and he came to Wavertree with his mind irrevocably made up as to the course he intended to pursue. Absence had weakened the influence of one sister and strengthened that of the other; the heart he knew to be his own, with that caprice so common to human nature, was valueless; while the one that must be struggled for, must be forced to concede every thing to his power, was estimated above all price.

Pauline had discarded her suspicions, and during the first hours of their meeting she was too happy in his presence to notice such slight changes in his manner as might have warned her of the blow about to fall upon her heart.

When supper was over, Mr. Harrington said,

"I placed my affairs on so satisfactory a footing, during my absence, that I feel as if restored to my usual fortune. A liberal fit came over me, girls, and I brought you the presents you should have had at Christmas."

"And I, too," said Malcolm, in his most winning tone, "have ventured to repair my neglect at that season. I trust you will not disdain the souvenirs I have brought?"

Adèle, to whom these words were addressed, looked up, caught the expression of his glance, and she recoiled with a strange feeling of repulsion, mingled with surprise. A painful suspicion flashed across her mind, but it was instantly repelled, and she frankly said,

"Provided the offering is not too costly; and your good taste, Mr. Malcolm, has, doubtless, prevented you from selecting what I may not with propriety accept from you."



"If the value of my offerings were measured by my sense of the charms of her who is to receive them, fair Adèle, I should spend a fortune in obtaining them," he replied, in a voice so guarded that no one present save herself comprehended the import of his words.

Inexpressibly haughty was the movement of that beautiful head, as Adèle regarded him with an expression of surprise he was at no loss to interpret, and his soul almost quailed before it; yet he would not now recoil, and in his eyes, as he fixed his gaze on hers, she read what made the blood recede from her heart, and caused a chill, as of death, to quiver through her veins.

All her father's obligations to this man flashed on her mind, and, with that intuition of evil which so often comes to us, she comprehended why Malcolm had taken such pains to place Mr. Harrington in his power. Yet even this was not so terrible as the thought that she had rivaled her sister where her heart was irrevocably bestowed; and then all the double-dealing of this unmasked hypocrite arose before her. She felt that to recoil before him was to lose the little vantage-ground she possessed, and with a glance of chilling disdain, she said,

"Excuse me, Mr. Malcolm; you make a slight mistake as to whom your offering is due. I can not accept what was assuredly designed for another."

She turned so decidedly from him that he could not add another word. This aside had been unnoticed by all present except Pauline, and she was far from suspecting its true meaning. While it passed, several parcels were brought in

and placed on the table. The party gathered around it, and were soon in the pleasant excitement of looking over their contents.

Three elegantly illustrated books were presented by Mr. Harrington to his sister and daughters, and then came the offerings of Malcolm. A fine work-box was presented to Miss Harrington, an exquisitely carved fan, with a miniature mirror, set in precious stones, on either side, was for Pauline, and a small papier-maché desk, filled with paper and envelops, bore the name of Adèle.

The offering was not very costly, and she had no pretext for refusing it at present, but the resolution was in her own mind to return it to him at the first favorable opportunity. Pauline's fan excited the most admiration; it was an importation from China, and was a specimen of the most curious and elaborate carving. It reminded Pauline of Madame De Staël's comparison of fine architecture to frozen music. She spoke of it, and Malcolm said,

"Then is it a most appropriate offering to you, Miss Pauline; for a sweeter minstrel I have seldom heard."

Pauline lifted her eyes to his face, expecting to meet his, but he was only looking toward her, not at her; and she thought it strange that not once had their eyes met since he returned. "What could this mean?" she asked herself, and a vague terror of its true import, fell upon her heart. Then her father's words came as an assurance to her mind, and she would not listen to the voice of warning that began to ring its knell in her soul.

Adèle sat down beside her father, and inquired about Vic-

tor. Of him Mr. Harrington had not much to tell; he seemed making an effort to accustom himself to the routine of business, but great indulgence was extended to him on account of the manner in which he had been reared. Mr. Harrington hoped for the best, but if Messrs. Hall had told the whole truth, they would probably have stated to his father, that it was a hopeless experiment to make a man of business of Victor. They tolerated his presence in their establishment through consideration for his father, but no trust of the slightest importance was ever confided to him, because they had no confidence in his ability to discharge it in a satisfactory manner. He copied commercial letters for them into immense books kept for that purpose, a few hours every morning, and then was at liberty to appropriate the rest of the day as he pleased.

Victor made no effort to acquire information in his new pursuit; his only aim seemed to be to satisfy Mrs. Ruskin that he was really doing something toward his own support, that she might not force Louise to break with him entirely; and day after day, his heart was devoured with jealousy as he saw his giddy mistress flirting with some new admirer, or smiling more sweetly on Nevin than he thought she had a right to do in her position toward himself.

Of much of this Mr. Harrington was happily ignorant, and he reported his son as doing pretty well, considering all things; and the sisters listened with eager interest, hoping that at last some manly feeling of self-dependence had been aroused within him. Miss Gertrude sighed, and doubted, but she did not express her fears, and the affectionate hopes of

those who loved him were not dimmed by a word or look calculated to dispel the agreeable illusion that Victor was learning to be of some use to himself as well as to others.

In the exhilaration of his spirits, Mr. Harrington talked much more than usual, and Adèle knew that he believed himself freed from the immediate pressure of care concerning his business affairs. With the new light that had dawned on her mind, laying bare the true intentions of Malcolm, she felt a sympathy and commiseration for him which she could only express by drawing near to him, and clasping his hand between both her own. She thrust aside the unhappy position in which she herself was placed, as something to be reflected on when it was laid actually before her, stripped of the vague terror with which uncertainty now enveloped it. Let her look the evil in the face, and she could rise to struggle against it, for she eminently possessed that fine nature which rebounds beneath the pressure of evil.

At length Mr. Harrington asked,

"Have no letters arrived since I left?"

"None for you; father," replied Adèle, "but Cousin Philip has good news from home."

"What is it, my dear boy?" and he turned and placed his hand affectionately on the shoulder of the young man, who had seated himself at his other side. Evelyn, thus called on, related to him the intended marriage of his sister, and his own summons to the paternal roof to be present at the ceremony, so soon as it would be safe for him to leave his present asylum. Mr. Harrington's face clouded—

"My dear Philip, I do not like to hear you speak of leav-

ing me. Do you know that you have become almost necessary to me during the short months you have been here? I shall write to your father, and take on myself all care for your future. Thus you can remain in the climate that is best suited to your delicate organization, and be as a son to me."

At these words Malcolm frowned, and bit his lips, but without remarking his emotion, Evelyn replied,

"Thank you, dear sir. We will talk this over at some other time; but whatever my ultimate decision may be, I shall always remember your kind intentions toward me with deep gratitude."

While Philip spoke, Malcolm watched him keenly to see if one glance of mutual intelligence passed between him and Adèle; but he detected no signs of an understanding between them, and with renewed confidence in the strength of his own position, he awaited calmly the issue of events. He was quieter and more self-absorbed than usual, and at length Mr. Harrington remarked this. He turned toward him, and said,

"My best friend, you do not seem to enjoy yourself as much as I could wish. He who has proved himself so true to me, must not be permitted to grow dull beneath my roof-tree. Pauline, my love, perhaps Mr. Malcolm would like to hear some music. You used to like to sing together."

Pauline arose at once, and went to the piano; but before Malcolm followed her, he paused to say,

"You know, dear sir, when the heart is full of uncertain hope, the tongue can not find many words. When once assured of my true position in your family, my usual vivacity will return."

He spoke in an under tone to Mr. Harrington, but he felt fully assured that Adèle heard and understood his words, for she grew pale, and trembled at her father's reply.

"Have little fear for the result. *My* daughter will not close her heart to the pleadings of her father's best friend, even if no preference already exists in your favor."

A single bright gleam of exultation flashed upon the shrinking Adèle, which seemed to say,

"How dare you resist that appeal?" and Malcolm was gone. She bowed her head upon her breast, nor saw nor heard any thing distinctly until the blended voices of the singers arose clear and thrilling upon the air.

Malcolm sung as usual, without a false note ; but several times the voice of Pauline faltered, and it seemed to require all the effort she could make to go on with her part. What self-control she was practicing, no one present could have imagined, for she sung when a deluge of anguish was overwhelming her heart.

Oh ! indomitable pride of woman, great is your power to roll back the surging waves of despair, and with the strength of mighty will, bid them be at peace, until silence and solitude give them free dominion, where there is no eye to behold save that of Omnipotence.

When the young girl arose from the instrument, there was a strange glitter in her eyes, caused by the unshed tears that were resolutely forced back to their source. At length the hour for retiring arrived, and as they bade each other good-night, Mr. Harrington said to Adèle,

"My child, you must be ill. Your hands are cold as ice."

"Oh no, sir, I am quite well," she replied with assumed cheerfulness. "Come, sister, let us seek the realm of dreams as soon as possible."

She drew her arm around the form of Pauline, and passed with her from the room. Malcolm arose and opened the door for them—he stood on the side next to Adèle, and as she went out with an expression of disdainful pride upon her features, which she did not seek to control, he breathed into her ear, "Examine the desk."

She gave no token that the whisper had been heard, but walked on, almost sustaining the faltering steps of Pauline. They reached their own apartment, and after placing her sister tenderly in a large chair before the fire, she drew a low seat beside her, and leaned her head upon the clasped hands of Pauline.

The heart-stricken girl sat motionless for many moments, with slow tears stealing down her face. It was martyrdom to her to shed them, wrung from her as they were, over her blighted illusions. She at length found voice to say,

"Adèle, examine the desk, as he bade you. In that, you will undoubtedly find a letter which will unveil his cruel policy more completely. I am weak now, my darling, because—because, this was so unexpected—so terrible. But I shall soon be able to summon strength to bear it."

Without a word, Adèle arose, sought for the desk, which had been placed on her dressing-stand, and opened it. With tremulous haste she turned over the snowy sheets of writing-paper, and beneath them all, found a letter addressed to herself. She tore it open, and read,

"By some inexplicable mistake of your father, I am placed in a most embarrassing position between yourself and your sister. He imagines that I love Pauline, while you must know that from the first hour of our acquaintance I have been enthralled by you alone. Can you have ever for one moment doubted this, Adèle?

"You showed by your manner, that lover-like assiduity was not welcome to you, and I lavished fraternal attention upon your sister; at first, because she stood in that relation to you, but afterward, because I really cherished a high esteem and admiration for her. Pauline herself will exonerate me from ever having expressed any thing warmer than friendship, and that I am proud and happy to claim from her.

"But from you—O Adèle, I have written calmly, but my heart is on fire with a passion which can dare any thing sooner than be disappointed. Words are poor and powerless to express the half of my emotions; they are but sounds, but what I feel is a terrible, powerful, overmastering reality. Be mine, and all that human effort can attain shall be done for the happiness of you and yours;—refuse, and I can not answer for myself. I know not to what depths the demon you will then arouse within me may impel me, in abusing the power I hold over the destiny of all you love.

"O, pardon me this threat, my best-loved Adèle; for I would not have you driven into my arms by fear. Love me, love me, for I swear that I can prove myself worthy of your love, although I have schemed and planned to force you to concede it to me, should other means fail. Examine our actual position toward each other in all its bearings, and re-



member that I am either the joyful guardian of your future happiness, or the hard and ruthless creditor you will make me to your father. ✓

"Accept my offered hand, and I cancel the mortgage I hold on his property and restore him to independence at once; refuse, and I dare not answer for myself, for every good and true feeling will then be turned to gall and bitterness. R. M."

Adèle read, and trembled. This cold, hard man here assumed a new character to her. As steel is made from heated iron, she felt that his fierce passions would harden under disappointment into something terrible to contend with. She held the letter in her nerveless grasp, her mind in a confused whirl of conflicting feelings and interests.

With feverish eagerness, Pauline had watched her as she read, and she held out her hand for the letter.

"I must read it, Adèle,"

"O! my dear sister," she tearfully exclaimed, "ask me not. It is too, too cruel. It will break your heart."

Pauline smiled strangely, and there was something ineffably touching in her voice, as she said,

"My heart is harder than you think. The worst is passed, Adèle. I know that he never loved me, then why doubt my firmness to bear all things also? The very cruelty to which you refer, may be as a tower of strength to me. Let me read it; I claim it as my right."

Thus constrained, Adèle gave her the letter. She ran her eyes over the lines, and, at first, a slight spot of crimson

glowed on her cheek, to fade away in the pallor of seeming death, as she came to the conclusion. She had overrated her powers of endurance, for she lay before Adèle perfectly insensible, and nearly as cold as if death had really claimed her as his own.

Repressing her own violent agitation, Adèle had firmness to restrain her first impulse to call for assistance. She understood the proud reserve of Pauline's character, and she knew it would aggravate her sufferings tenfold, to know that others were aware of her indisposition at such a crisis. She brought essences from the toilette, and bathed her pale face; she chafed her cold hands in her own, and was finally rewarded by returning symptoms of animation.

With a long-drawn-sigh, Pauline unclosed her eyes, beheld the anxious face of her who knelt before her, and suffering her head to droop upon her shoulder, she wept long and silently.

At length Adèle softly said,

"You do not blame me, dearest? This shall not estrange our hearts from each other?"

Pauline threw her arms round her and clasped her fondly to her bosom.

"Never, never—let us cling together, my sister; and give not a bad man the power to come between us and sever our hearts from each other."

"You pardon, then, my involuntary crime against you? O, Pauline, how little worth is this fatal beauty, when compared with your goodness! That man is blind, infatuated, or he must have seen this. God is punishing him for some

evil he has committed, when he permits him to turn from the brightest boon fate can bestow, a pure, loving, woman's heart. May the hour come to him in which he will feel and comprehend this in all its bitterness."

"'Vengeance is mine,' saith the Lord," said Pauline, solemnly. "Denounce him not, my sister; but leave him to that higher wisdom which permits not wrong toward the helpless and unoffending to pass unpunished. Let us pray that his hard heart may be turned from its cruel purpose toward one who has trusted him so implicitly as our poor father has."

Adèle shuddered.

"There, there is the horror. He has him completely in his power; he makes me the price of his freedom from the galling bondage of debt, while my whole soul recoils from him."

Pauline grasped her hand, and fixed her dilating eyes upon her.

"You will not give yourself to him, Adèle? it would be severing us forever. I can cast my fatal dream of love into oblivion, but I can not see you take the place I once thought my own, and live. O! it will take a long and bitter struggle to tear the image of that false one from my heart."

Her agitation was frightful. Adèle felt the necessity of calming her; she knelt before her, took her cold hands in her own, and pressing them upon her troubled heart, solemnly said,

"Hear me, Pauline, and believe me. I pledge you the

word of one who loves you truly, that I will endure any evil sooner than become the wife of Mr. Malcolm. I would sooner labor for my bread, than owe wealth to his forbearance. I could lay down my life for you, rather than usurp the place he led you to believe belonged to you alone."

Pauline seemed soothed by this assurance, but after reflecting a few moments, she feebly said,

"I am very selfish to exact such a promise, Adèle, when it may be necessary to our father's interests that you shall endeavor to return the passionate love you seem to have inspired."

"It is not now a question of interest, Pauline; but one of feeling. Our father is too honorable, too just a man, and he loves us too dearly to submit to the insult this ruthless man has offered to us both. How dared he come beneath our own roof, to play the lover to one daughter, while the other was really the object of his pursuit? It fills me with disdainful resentment to think of his conduct."

"Forgive him, for my sake," murmured the unhappy girl. "O, I am weak—weak—I can not bear to hear him spoken of in such terms. Ah! why did Heaven bestow on him so much that is noble, and mar all by withholding truth and honor?"

Adèle gazed on her with deep compassion. Darker than the "valley of the shadow of death," was the pathway her unhappy sister had now entered on, and long must she wander therein before she could again behold a glimpse of sunshine on her weary way. She could understand the power such a man as Malcolm must long hold over one who had

given him the first love of a generous and tender heart. Slow to be won had Pauline been, and this was the end of her only dream of wedded happiness.

This was a wretched night to the two sisters. Neither slept at all; Pauline, in the first anguish of wounded feeling, felt as if death would be welcome, for she believed that alone could still the convulsive agony that rived her heart. Adèle did as Malcolm bade her; she endeavored calmly to examine their actual position toward each other; to realize all the evil power he possessed over the fortunes of one so dear to her as her father; but all her reflections ended in the conviction that any fate would be preferable to the acceptance of Malcolm as her future husband.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE following morning dawned clear and bright as if no cloud had ever marred the tranquil beauty of the azure vault which overarched crime, and wrong, and fraud, and goodness, and truth ; smiling on all alike ; inviting the evil to repentance, and the good to adoration, for that mercy which gives sunshine and rain alike to the just and the unjust.

Malcolm was up with the dawn, for he too had passed a restless night, and when he did sleep, dreams of unpleasant augury filled his troubled slumbers. A fear he would not acknowledge, filled his heart, that in spite of the interests which appealed so powerfully to Adèle, she would refuse to avert ruin to her father at such a price. What then would be his course ? He almost trembled at the dark and bitter thoughts which such a supposition alone engendered. He, the proud in heart, and high in station, had condescended to become an intriguer, a deceiver, almost a sharper, to gain the control of this girl's destiny, and yet her obstinacy might defeat all his skillfully laid plans. He clenched his hands, and ground his teeth together at the bare thought.

He glanced his eye around on the luxuriant fields, and substantial evidences of wealth, before him, and thought,

“Let her refuse me if she dares, and all this can become

mine. I can cast forth all she loves to poverty, and by Heaven! I will do it should she prove intractable."

Then came the conviction of the worthlessness of all these additional possessions, if he failed to gain her he so ardently desired to win. He was already rich beyond his desires; he was not mercenary; then of what value could the property of the ruined family be to him who possessed more than he cared to use? He only wished to control it, as a means of crushing her beneath the iron weight of broken fortunes, until she would gladly accept the hand that offered wealth, however repulsive to her feelings its possessor might be.

It was something to triumph over her even thus—to bring her humbled and yielding to his heart—ready to cast the past into oblivion, and feign gratitude and affection, even when she felt them not. The disdainful haughtiness of Adèle on the previous evening had pierced him to the soul, and he felt a fierce joy in beholding her, in imagination, bending beneath the iron power he had established over her destiny.

As he thus mused, Malcolm paced up and down the piazza with that rapid and uneven tread which corresponded with the emotions sweeping through his mind. The sisters heard the monotonous echo of those impatient footsteps even in their apartment, and both knew perfectly well by whom they were made.

Adèle arose, and made her toilette, trying, while thus occupied, to nerve herself for the meeting she was resolute to seek as soon as possible.

Pauline too, made an effort to rise, but she sunk back, too weak and feverish to succeed in the attempt. She felt that

she was ill—there was an acute pain in her temples which seemed to dull the mental anguish she had borne throughout the night, by the stupefaction of physical suffering.

Adèle did not speak to her until she was quite ready to go out. She then came to the bedside, and tenderly kissed the throbbing brow of her sister. She held the desk in her hand, and Pauline muttered,

“The fan—take that too. I can not keep it; the air from it might perhaps cool this burning fever, for I know it would be as chilling to me as a polar breeze, but the sight of it would make me worse. Take it to him; I care not what he thinks. He knows I loved him—my pride can not be saved there; but he shall also learn that I have too much self-respect to retain his gift.”

“I will do so, darling; but you seem very ill. Let me call my aunt, and send for Dr. Germain.”

“No—no—I charge you say nothing about it. Solitude—solitude is all I need. Medicine can not aid me: it is the soul that grieves and flutters, and sends this feverish torrent through my veins. Give me time to become reasonable—to arrange my future conduct, and I shall rise up, looking, to the outside world, as usual. Oh, Adèle, how many hearts have brokenly lived on. Mine will only be one more added to the sad catalogue. I must speak now while the fever and the anguish are upon me, and the weight will seem less heavy when shared with another.”

There was the wildness of incipient delirium in her voice and eyes, and Adèle spoke soothingly to her, while she bathed her brow in cold water. Pauline presently closed her eyes,



and lay perfectly calm ; hoping that she slept, Adèle placed the fan in the desk, and after a long and tender gaze upon her pale face, departed on her painful errand.

In strange contrast with her own feelings, all the soft beauty of the morning came home to her heart, as she stepped forth on the piazza, and looked out on the glittering sunshine bathing her beautiful home in its bright beams. Every memory of her life was entwined with this spot, and yet she must pronounce the words, which, in all human probability, would exile her beloved father from the scenes which were so dear to him.

It was a fearful responsibility, and for one moment her courage failed her, but the approach of Malcolm, with looks of passionate admiration beaming on his expressive face, aroused the deepest repulsion her gentle nature had ever known.

He offered to take her hand, but she drew back so coldly, that he was offended. He said,

“I had indulged the hope that a night's reflection would induce you to feel that we must meet as friends, Miss Adèle Harrington.”

“It has only taught me that under the mask of honor and friendship, the most deadly blow may be dealt at the peace of those who trust such men as you.”

As Adèle spoke, she took the desk from beneath the shawl she had thrown around her to protect her from the morning air, and placed it on a flower-stand that stood in an angle of the piazza. Malcolm regarded it with a sardonic expression.

“So, you refuse my gift. Is that an augury of what is to follow ?”

"If you will accept it as such, it will save me much suffering."

He looked at the pale cheeks, usually so bright with health and hope—he saw the trembling lips, and he felt that he possessed power of some kind, if it did not extend to the control of her affections, and he exulted in it. Her first words had stung him deeply, and he felt his heart hardening to her evident suffering. He deliberately said,

"I can not accept it in that light. You, yourself have too much at stake, sincerely to wish me to do so."

"But I do, most earnestly, most truly, I assure you," she eagerly replied. "You wrong yourself, Mr. Malcolm. You are too generous to abuse the power you have so unrighteously obtained, to the injury of those who are dear to me, because—because I can not love you."

"Why can you not, Adèle?" he passionately asked. "Am I repulsive, hateful in your sight, that even such motives as you have for tolerating my suit, possess no weight with you?"

She replied in a subdued tone, for she felt as if inflicting a wrong upon her unhappy sister by even alluding to her position toward Malcolm,

"Is there not a reason for declining it, which must have greater weight with an affectionate and true heart, than all the motives you can array in its favor?"

He listened conscience-stricken. Presently he said,

"I have explained that misconception. Pauline can not accuse me—"

"Hold, sir!" said the young girl, with dignity. "My

sister accuses you of nothing. Her name need not be called in this discussion. I refer now to what I myself have seen. I, like the rest of my family, was impressed with the belief that you sought Pauline as your wife, and your attentions to her could bear no other interpretation. You sought her love in every honorable manner; at times, I am sure, you must have preferred her; and it seems to me some terrible hallucination which makes you now assert a preference for me."

Malcolm smiled sarcastically.

"You must be a rare judge of human nature, fair Adèle, for you have analyzed a feeling I was scarcely conscious of myself. There were moments when your sister greatly attracted me; when, had you been away, I might, perhaps, have wooed her to my heart. But, mark me; even in those moments, one glance at your person, one tone of your voice, brought me back to you, and I felt that you were the true divinity before whom my spirit bowed."

"Then was your conduct most cruel to her and insulting to me. Never will I pardon it; never give him who was capable of playing this double part, greater power over my fate than he now possesses."

"When you are fully aware of the extent of that power, you may possibly change your conduct to me. Adèle, try me not too far. I adore you. I would be the bestower of good on all connected with you; pause, then, ere you decide to make me your bitter and implacable foe. I offer you such love as men rarely feel—or that hatred which is born of the despair of slighted passion. Such men as I

know no medium—reflect well, then, ere you decide against my suit.”

His face was white with repressed anger, and his eyes glowed like vivid fire as he fastened their gaze, half of menace, half of passion, upon her. Adèle shrank before it as from something she could not, dared not comprehend in all its intensity of meaning. She veiled her face and stood silent and trembling for several moments; but never, for one instant, did her determination falter. Her sister's rival no earthly temptation should induce her to become; and, after collecting her bewildered thoughts, she looked calmly up and said,

“You have threatened me with your power over the fortunes of my father; learn from me that so great is my love for him, that, for his sake, I might have struggled against the repulsion I feel to the idea of becoming your wife, and, in time, have possibly cultivated some feeling of tenderness for you; but this, your own unmanly course toward another most dear to me, has rendered impossible. Threats nor persuasions can ever induce me to stand beside you as the partner of that life which should be shared with another.”

Malcolm's head drooped upon his breast and his eyes lowered before the clear glance bent unfalteringly upon him. He muttered,

“We shall see, we shall see. Wait till you have seen your father—have heard all he has to say.”

“He will sustain me in what I have said; that you have defeated your own wishes by acting a double part, where

every impulse of truth and honor should have made you show which was the sister really preferred."

"Miss Harrington, your words are hard to bear. Will you answer me one question with the same frankness with which you have hitherto spoken?"

"I will, if I can with propriety do so."

"Then tell me if you were not quite aware, from the day of our first acquaintance, that you had inspired me with ardent admiration?"

Adèle blushed and slightly hesitated, for such had been her first impression; but she paused only a moment.

"I will speak the truth, painful as it is to me. You, like many others, seemed charmed with this poor perishing beauty, of which I so often have the consciousness unpleasantly forced upon me. I do not value admiration elicited by my personal advantages alone; and when a man of your cultivation and good sense, on further acquaintance, seemed attracted by the mental superiority of my sister, I rejoiced that it was so; and esteemed you more highly, that you had the good taste to appreciate her."

"Expressed in a most sisterly and affectionate manner," replied he, with veiled sarcasm. "But I appeal to you to do me this much justice. Remember that, from the first, I showed my predilection for yourself, and what followed was only an effort on my part, to gain the good opinion of her who seemed as your second self. She possessed great influence with you, I well knew; and to gain that was my chief object in devoting myself to her as I did."

"You, who have had so much greater experience in life than I have, should know that in matters of this kind, the heart alone must speak. The praises of another as often disgust as they prepossess in favor of an aspirant for the affections."

"It is not thus with all women; many are won as Benedict gained his bride."

Adèle's lips slightly curled.

"In Beatrice, Shakespeare may have truly portrayed one phase of the womanly character, but not the highest. You misjudged me if you supposed that I belong to that class of women."

Malcolm walked a few steps from her, and then returned.

"Would to God you belonged to those who can be wrought on by any ordinary motives. Will nothing induce you to reconsider your determination? Adèle, have mercy on me—on yourself—for your consent to become mine will save such suffering to others as you would willingly avert from them, if you only comprehend its extent."

He again made an effort to take her hand, though the pale, fixed features offered no encouragement to do so. She quietly evaded him, and said gently, but firmly,

"My reply has already been given, Mr. Malcolm; I assure you, that any further effort toward changing my resolution will be useless. Use as you will the power you have so, unrighteously sought, my father will, I am sure, sustain me in the course I have pursued. Consider this interview as final, for with my consent, we meet no more."

She flitted past him, but he detained her almost forcibly

by grasping her dress. Malcolm endeavored to quell the rush of passionate anger that swept through his breast ; but the fierce struggle was mirrored on his features, and Adèle turned her eyes away, that she might not behold what filled her with terror and disgust.

"I have but one thing more to say, and to that you shall listen. Had not that pale-faced Evelyn made his abode beneath the same roof, your answer might not have been so positive. Adèle Harrington, you love another."

The bright crimson leaped to the cheek of the young girl, and an indignant denial arose to her lips ; but the words died away, and she grew faint as she felt the piercing gaze of Malcolm reading her very soul. She slowly said,

"I might refuse to reply to a charge thus rudely and unwarrantably brought ; but I will say, that no words of mutual love have ever passed between myself and *any* suitor."

"Of what need are words, when glances can so well supply their place ? You have not—you dare not deny the truth of my accusation."

"I must first learn by what right you bring it," said Adèle, haughtily. "Let me pass, sir ; I have already borne your presence too long."

He bowed proudly, loosened his grasp upon her robe, and stepped aside.

"Go," he sternly said, "and carry with you the knowledge that you have consummated the ruin of your father. Let that remembrance come to you as a life-long reproach, for now I am nerved for any thing."

Adèle fled to her own room, weeping tears of outraged

pride, and wounded sensibility, which she could not repress. Malcom's words had forced her to look into her own heart, and the veil which had concealed her true feelings was rudely torn aside. She comprehended now why his overtures filled her with such deep repulsion; and with terror she felt that her secret was at the mercy of another. His jealous heart had fathomed in a few hours, what she had sedulously concealed even from herself.

She found Pauline in a light slumber, the effect of exhaustion, from which she aroused herself a few moments after her sister's entrance. Adèle wiped away the traces of her tears, and beheld with deep alarm the change the last hour had wrought in her. The deathlike pallor of her features was now brightened by a vivid spot of crimson on each cheek, which lighted up her eyes with almost supernatural lustre. She murmured snatches of her favorite songs, and talked in the intervals in so wild a manner, that Adèle listened in shuddering terror.

Many of the most thrilling strains from Norma, where her broken heart is wailed forth, were given with startling effect, and then she paused, and muttered,

"I sing too loud. *He* will hear me—he will comprehend what those strains so well express. O! my life is desolate—desolate—my dreams all vanished," and her voice sank in a low whisper, as if with this consciousness all power to wrestle with the dreary phantoms that encompassed her had suddenly departed. She lay with closed eye-lids, through which bitter tears forced themselves, and flowed over her flushed cheeks.

Adèle softly took her hand, and her presence seemed to



restore to Pauline a dim consciousness of what had so lately passed. She feebly said,

"You have seen him. Tell me how the interview ended. Did you leave him no hope of success with you? Are you sure you left him none?"

"Quite sure, my dear sister. Compose yourself; all is ended with Mr. Malcolm, so far as we are both concerned."

"All!" and she started up. "And shall I see him no more! hear the echoes of his voice only in my own soul! Cruel, cruel, to let a fair face come between himself and the heart that so truly loves him. O, Adèle, why did nature deny me that outward beauty that never fails to win?"

Again she sunk back, quite exhausted, and Adèle, in great alarm, was about to summon her aunt, when she entered the room. The unusual sounds proceeding from the apartment of her nieces, had aroused Miss Gertrude, and she came to learn their import. She was shocked at the appearance of Pauline, and earnestly inquired,

"What has happened? Why do I find your sister thus, my child?"

Adèle replied, with bitter indignation,

"Her heart is broken by the cruel treachery of one unworthy to claim even a passing thought from her."

Before Miss Harrington could reply, the voice of her brother was heard at the door.

"What is the matter, girls? Kitty tells me that Pauline is ill."

Adèle opened the door, and the sight of her distressed face filled him with alarm.

"Good Heavens! what is it, Adèle? Is your sister so very ill?"

"I am afraid she is, sir. Look at her; how wild and worn she is. I wished to send for Dr. Germain when I first arose, but she insisted that I should not."

Pauline, overcome by physical and mental suffering, lay half insensible, and Mr. Harrington gazed on her with dismay.

"Gertrude, dear sister, send for the doctor, without delay, my daughter is dangerously ill."

Miss Harrington left the room to fulfill his request, and he turned to Adèle, with a bewildered air,

"Is there any reason for this sudden attack, that you can fathom?"

"Dearest father, I fear there is," said the trembling girl, clasping his hand in her own, and tenderly pressing it. Adèle knew all the danger of sudden and violent excitement to her father, and she would willingly have given a portion of her own life to spare him the blow about to fall.

Mr. Harrington sank into a chair that stood beside the bed, and seemed to summon all his fortitude to bear what was to follow. He presently said in a hollow tone,

"I do not know what you mean, Adèle. I am quite in the dark. Last night every thing seemed so happy—why should Pauline be ill to-day, when her lover is here to tell the tale to which I know she is not indifferent?"

"The tale is already told, my father, and you behold its effects."

Still he could not understand what was dimly fore-

shadowed by the distress of Adèle, and he said with irritation,

"Speak plainly, child. I am no seer, and can not foresee what is about to happen."

"The worst to Pauline has already happened, father. She knows that her fervent love is slighted, her heart left to break, by him who once seemed to value it."

A tide of crimson rushed to the face of the father, and he clenched his hands until the nails buried themselves in the flesh.

"He, he—Malcolm has not dared to act thus by *my* daughter? There is some misconception—he is honorable, liberal. O, she has misunderstood him sadly."

"There is no misunderstanding this, father," and she drew forth Malcolm's last letter, which she had delayed returning for this purpose. That said all that was necessary and spared her a most painful explanation.

As Mr. Harrington read, his face darkened, and large drops gathered upon his forehead. When he finished, he bent his head down, and held the paper so as to conceal the working of his features from his daughter. She only pressed the hand she still held to her lips, and waited for him to speak. He presently asked,

"Did you suspect this, Adèle? Did he ever give you reason to suppose that he preferred you?"

"Until last night I believed him devoted to Pauline," she briefly replied.

"And now, what says your heart?" asked her father.

"That its owner would sooner face poverty, toil, hardship

in any form, than give herself to one who has shown himself so destitute of principle and feeling."

"Right, right—there spoke my own child," he said, with emotion. "Traitor! I now comprehend his game; but it shall not overwhelm me in ruin, although you do refuse him. With good fortune on my side, I can baffle him yet."

"Thank Heaven for that assurance, my dear father; for a sad fear weighed on my heart, even when I declared to him that I would never marry him."

"You have seen him, then? When?"

"This morning. I sought him when I heard him walking on the piazza, and he knows exactly how he stands with me."

"Right—you are my own brave girl. But Pauline. O, it breaks my heart to see her suffering thus."

The sound of her own name, seemed to arouse the suffering girl from the stupor into which she had fallen. She suddenly unclosed her wild eyes, and seeing her father beside her, she became for a few moments conscious of his identity. She moaned,

"You will not let him take my sister from me. She is all to me now: that evil man would torture us both, by tearing us asunder forever. Adèle must not take my place beside him: Oh! I should hate her then, sinful as it would be."

"My precious darling, only be calm, and all shall be well with you," said Mr. Harrington, soothingly. "No one shall do any thing to render you unhappy."

"Nothing can now be done to crush me into deeper

misery," was the dejected reply, and she again closed her eyes, and turned her head to conceal the tears that gushed from them.

"O, Adèle, Adèle, this ruin is harder to bear, than loss of fortune," exclaimed the affectionate father, as he wiped away the drops wrung from his eyes by the picture of desolation before him.

"Fortune—fortune," muttered the sick girl. "Who cares for fortune? There is but one dower worth possessing to a woman, and that is beauty."

"Yet it has been a fatal possession to many, dear sister," said Adèle softly.

"Not half so fatal as the want of it is to thousands. O, take your fair face away, lest my reft heart become jealous of its charms. Then I should hate myself indeed."

Miss Harrington passed before Adèle and gently put her aside.

"Let me attend to Pauline, my love, while you seek rest, for you look perfectly worn out. Dr. Germain will soon be here now, and in the meantime she needs quiet more than any thing else."

"Quiet," thought Pauline, bitterly. "If you could only behold the tumult seething in my heart and brain, you would never use such a mocking word. I believe I shall die or lose my reason, and I do not much care which, for I am reckless in my misery;" and again the feverish rush of anguish brought back the delirium, which had partially subsided.

On his arrival, Dr. Germain found her in a wild paroxysm, and he pronounced her in a violent fever. From the rapidity

with which such diseases run their course in a southern climate, he felt that no time was to be lost.

Occupied with Pauline, no one of the family appeared at the morning meal, and the two guests breakfasted together. Unconscious of the cause of Pauline's sudden illness, Evelyn spoke of it with concern, and he was surprised at the haughty coldness with which his companion listened.

Even the knowledge that Pauline was suffering from his own treachery, did not at that crisis cause Malcolm to regret. He was too bitterly disappointed; too resentful himself, to waste sympathy on another; and could he have found a pretext for fastening a quarrel on the unconscious Philip, he would have grasped at it with eagerness, and never have left the field until his own life, or that of his antagonist had paid the forfeit of their rivalry. He drank several cups of very strong coffee, and without tasting food, abruptly arose from the table.

Evelyn's eye followed him in surprise, but he mentally excused him, by thinking,

"He is in love with Pauline, poor fellow, and her danger unmans him. Now I think of it, I have heard this Malcolm spoken of as an admirer of hers. Dear cousin, I trust she is not dangerously ill."

At that instant he caught sight of Dr. Germain mounting his horse, and hurried out to intercept him. The physician looked unusually serious, and in reply to his inquiries, said,

"Miss Pauline is in a very critical condition, Mr. Evelyn. She has evidently received a mental shock of a very serious nature, just at a time when her nervous system was in a con-

dition to be most seriously affected by it, as is proved by the result."

"Do you really think her in danger of death?" asked Evelyn, in alarm.

"In most imminent danger; for she has every symptom of a violent and unmanageable fever. I am compelled to leave her now, but I shall return in a few hours, and remain here until some change takes place, either for better or worse."

He bowed, and rode away, and Philip turned to encounter the fixed gaze of Malcolm, who stood pale, yet composed, within a few feet of him.

"This is a sad change from the joy of last evening," remarked the younger man.

Malcolm unclosed his lips as if to answer, but the words died away in a husky murmur; he turned away abruptly, and plunged into the shrubbery. As he strode on, the soft clear eyes of the sick girl seemed to be looking into his soul, and the thought of her danger again made his lately savage heart thrill to human sympathy. All the attraction she had ever possessed for him seemed to revive, and invest her with a tender interest that for a season melted the hardness from his nature.

Ill, dying for his sake, Pauline was an object of deep interest to him, but he felt within his inmost soul the secret conviction that should she be restored to her wonted health, the supremacy of beauty would again assert itself over his senses, and Adèle be the only coveted treasure. Adèle, who scorned him, who despised him, while the tender heart of Pauline adored him.

He had outraged this love, and for what? Rejection and contempt. Should the suffering one perish she would be as surely his victim as if the dagger or poison had consummated his crime, and an impassable gulf would thus arise between himself and the real object of his pursuit.

Should such be the fatal result, he would relinquish all claims on Mr. Harrington's estate, and endeavor thus to atone for his crime; for criminal he now felt his conduct to have been. Should she recover, his path lay broad before him. Adèle should be forced into becoming his wife, or ruin be brought upon her father.

While he thus mused, he was unconscious of footsteps tracking him with hurried and uneven tread, until the voice of Mr. Harrington sounded in his ears, and at the command of that gentleman he paused in his rapid career.

With a feeling of strong reluctance, he turned to meet the outraged father. Mr. Harrington held in his hand the letter which Adèle had recently given him, and he presented it to Malcolm with the brief remark,

"This is a production of yours, I believe, sir?"

Malcolm's self-possession did not desert him; he glanced coldly on it, and replied,

"It is, Mr. Harrington; and since your daughter has submitted it to you, I presume she has also sufficiently explained our relative position toward each other."

"She has—and I have followed you to return your insulting declaration of love to one whom I wish you distinctly to understand is, under *any* circumstances, quite beyond your reach."



Malcolm compressed his lips to keep back the angry words that rushed to them. With forced composure, he said,

"Perhaps it would be well, Mr. Harrington, for you to reconsider your words. Where so much is at stake, the caprices of a young lady should not be allowed too much weight."

"I comprehend the veiled threat in your words, sir," said Mr. Harrington, with dignity. "I now understand all your manœuvres to place me as much at your mercy as you think I am ; but I trust in God, and better friends than you have proved yourself, to rescue me from your power. But should the worst happen to me, know that I would sooner endure ruin in its most aggravated form, than barter my child to such a man as I now comprehend you to be, to save myself."

Malcolm's face was inscrutable ; he said,

"Very well, sir. You possess at least the merit of frankness ; whether it is prudent to use it toward one situated as I am with you, is for you to determine. It seems to me, that a painful misconception has placed me in a false position toward your whole family."

"Misconception !" repeated the father, indignantly ; but he checked himself, and added,

"Mr. Malcolm, there are some things that do not admit of discussion ; of such, is your anomalous position toward my family. If the feelings involved were of a less delicate nature, you may truly believe that I should not attempt to practice my present self-control. You have to deal with a gentleman, and a man of honor ; therefore, you escape unwhipped of that justice you so justly merit."

Malcolm's face darkened as he listened,

"And after all I have done to serve you, this is my reward?"

"Appeal not to your services, when you know with what motive they were rendered. I have implicitly trusted you, for, until this unhappy morning, not a doubt of you entered my mind. Now you stand unmasked before me, and bitterly painful is the revelation; not so much on the score of interest, as you may suppose, but because one I esteemed has fallen so utterly low in my regard."

Malcolm smiled disdainfully. He said,

"All men pursue their individual interest. I have simply done that which I supposed would further the wish that lies nearest my heart."

"And in thus acting, destroyed every hope of success."

"I am not so sure of that. Those who have never felt the actual pressure of difficulty and narrow means know not what lessons of worldly prudence they may learn from them. I refuse to receive your final reply, or that of your daughter, until six months shall have rolled away. At that time, you will both probably better comprehend our actual relations toward each other than you now do."

Mr. Harrington's face flushed, for his temper was rapidly getting the better of the self-control he had painfully imposed on himself from the commencement of this interview.

"You wish to take time to consummate the ruin you believe to be in your power. I grant you six months, but before they are passed, I will find means to rescue my property from

your claims, or forfeit it utterly. But even in that extreme case, my answer will still be the same. I, and those belonging to me, will know how to bear honorable poverty, better than the slavery of enforced submission to such a man as I now know you to be. Good morning, Mr. Malcolm. The hospitality of Wavertree is open to you as long as you choose to remain beneath its roof, but the master of the mansion you will excuse, as his mind is not in a condition to entertain visitors."

He bowed, and Malcolm also ceremoniously raised his hat. He said,

"I shall leave on the first boat that passes. Pray remember, sir, that this conversation will be forgotten when the day of reconciliation arrives."

"Remember it *until* that day," said Mr. Harrington, pointedly, as he moved away with rapid steps.

Malcolm slowly followed him in the direction of the house, intending to order his servant to be in readiness for the first steamer that came down the river. In the meantime he brooded over his plans.

He would delay his great blow, until the result of Pauline's illness was ascertained. Should the anguish he had inflicted not prove fatal, he would proceed to crush the fortunes of her family; not in his own person, however—that would bring too much odium upon him—but through the agency of one whose unscrupulous services he knew he could command, who would be ruthless as Fate itself in his demands.

In spite of the high tone assumed by Mr. Harrington in their recent interview, he fully believed that he could call on

no friend who would come to his rescue in the present crisis of his affairs. He had made himself fully acquainted with his resources and their availability, and he knew of no source from which he could raise so large a sum as was necessary to release his property from the mortgage he held upon it.

Within the next hour, Malcolm left Wavertree without bidding adieu to any of the family ; and as the steamer swept down the rapid stream, he looked back at the house filled with suffering by himself, and calculated how long it might be before he could enter as master, carrying with him the fiat which would bid the shrinking object of his pursuit crush down her swelling heart, and force back her tears, while she feigned a smiling welcome to the arbiter of her fate.

The interview with Mr. Harrington had only hardened his purpose, and the momentary softness inspired by the knowledge of Pauline's danger, passed away, leaving that heart of steel and will of adamant to their own devices.

## CHAPTER XIX.

DAYS of unconscious suffering to the helpless Pauline rolled away, and heavy hearts watched beside her; for her physician gave scarcely a gleam of hope that she would be restored to those who so fondly loved her.

Dark and gloomy weather followed the beautiful days we have lately described; no ray of sunshine had power to penetrate the heavy mist which hung in white wreaths over the lowland, often shrouding the surface of the river entirely from view.

In the evening twilight of such a day, dashes of rain were swept against the casement, and the wind wailed in fitful gusts around the house. The sick girl lay white and motionless upon her pillow, unconscious of the strife of the elements without; while Miss Harrington and Adèle sat beside a bright wood fire which sent its ruby glow throughout the apartment, and conversed in guarded tones. They spoke of Pauline, and her aunt said,

"I always thought the dear child possessed remarkable strength of character. I never could have believed that she would have sunk beneath such a blow as this."

"Ah, dear aunt, is it not generally the strong in soul that have the greatest tenderness of feeling? Think how often

my sister has been wooed, and how great must have been the attraction to which she at last yielded her heart. Great was the trust, boundless the love she must have bestowed on this man."

Miss Harrington sighed, and seemed absorbed in musing. At length she said, more as if speaking to herself than to her niece,

"Even should Pauline be spared to us, she will never marry now. I understand her heart by my—"

She paused abruptly, shaded her face with her hand, and remained silent, for her thoughts were traveling far back over the long track of years, to that turbulent period in the history of her own heart, when the voice of love spoke loudly in favor of one her principles revolted from uniting her fate with. She firmly believed she had acted for the best, and no sentimental sorrow had dimmed the path she had since trodden. She trusted that Pauline would yet arise from her couch of suffering, strong to meet the future, and in time, be able to say to her throbbing heart,

"Be at peace. This sorrow came from Him who doeth all things well, and I can bear it with resignation. It is better even thus, than united to one in whose honor and affection I have not implicit faith."

Adèle had risen, and was standing beside the bed, gazing down upon the wasted features of her sister. She took her nerveless hand in her own, and endeavored to impart a feeling of vitality to it by rubbing it gently. Presently she felt a slight pressure in the fingers, and connected words issued from the lips which had so long unclosed to utter only the

ravings of delirium. She bent down to hear the feeble whisper, and Pauline asked,

"Where is my father? How has he borne so much sorrow?"

"He is well—he has hoped for your restoration, and that has kept him up. O my dearest sister, how glad it makes my heart, to hear you speak thus once more."

"I have been very ill, I know. How long have I lain thus?"

"This is the ninth day we have watched over you."

"This, then, is the crisis. The dying often have intervals of reason before the great Conqueror comes. Such, I believe, is my condition now. Call my father, that I may see him once more."

At the sound of her voice, Miss Gertrude had drawn near. She now said,

"Call my brother, by all means, Adèle, but it is to see how much better our dear invalid is. You are greatly improved, my darling—your pulse is stronger, and you have no fever. Hope for yourself, and all will be well with you."

"All would indeed be well, aunt, if Heaven in its mercy, would claim me for its own. O, I shrink from life with its great burden of sorrow and care. Let me go to the better land, where treachery never more may wound; where hope will sing no falsehoods to the heart."

"And leave those who love you to grieve forever over the loss of their precious child? Life is worth a struggle, Pauline—the heart will rebound, and yet sing its glad hymn of gratitude to Him who granted the prayers of those who have watched over you, and gave you back to them."

"I am faint and weak, dear aunt; and I scarcely know what I should desire; but I think I shall die. I shall grieve that you must mourn for me, but O! I wish so much to go!"

Dr. Germain was in the house, watching for this crisis, and he came softly into the room, followed by Mr. Harrington. The physician came to the bedside, and she smiled faintly as she recognized him.

"You see, doctor, all your skill has failed you here. My spirit only tarries to bid farewell to the loved of earth, before it wings its way to the eternal morning."

"Not so, my dear young lady; earth will not so readily relinquish its hold upon you. I am surprised at the symptoms of amendment I see in you. Your eyes are clearer, and your voice grows stronger with every word you utter."

"That is only the last effort, doctor. When this excitement passes away, my life will pass with it."

"We will endeavor to assist nature, Miss Pauline, and you will yet live to say that skill may sometimes set the grim Conqueror at defiance. Take these drops, and when you recover from their effects you will feel like a new creature."

"Yes—I shall indeed be renewed in the blood of Him who died that man might live throughout all the ages of eternity, to glorify his holy name."

Her father raised her head, and she quaffed the contents of the cup the physician offered, and then sunk back upon his breast quite exhausted; Mr. Harrington tremulously said, as he bent fondly over her,

"My child, my darling, look up to me; feel how I clasp



you to my heart, as if even Fate itself shall not sever us, and endeavor to live for my sake."

After a pause, as if gathering strength to speak, she faintly said,

"I hear and comprehend you, father. Until now I shrank from the struggle life brings with it; but with your tender arms around me, I feel that I could willingly win my way back to life, should such be the will of Heaven. But my doom is written, and I may not avoid it. You will not be desolate—my sister—Victor remain to you. Ah, where is my brother, at this crisis? I see him not among you."

"I look for him; he will be here before many hours elapse," replied her father, in a troubled tone, for Victor's conduct was inexplicable to him.

At the commencement of Pauline's illness, Victor had been summoned home, in anticipation of a fatal termination of it; but no answer came in reply to the letter. A second one was then addressed to his employers, requesting some information of him, and, in reply, they stated that the young man had absented himself from their counting-house for many days, and they had no clew to his whereabouts.

But for the imminent danger in which Pauline lay, Mr. Harrington would at once have set out to New Orleans in search of him, but, for the present, that precluded every other interest; and in a state of great uneasiness he watched from hour to hour for the appearance of his truant son at Wavertree.

Victor came not, neither did they hear from him, and Adèle saw, with deep concern, from day to day, that these

double sources of unhappiness imprinted new furrows on her father's face, and seemed to give a more silvery hue to his already whitened hair.

"Where is Cousin Philip?" asked Pauline, glancing over the assembled group, and missing him from it.

"He is at the door, my love, and will gladly come in, if you will permit him."

"By all means: call him, aunt."

Evelyn obeyed the summons, and smiling feebly on him, Pauline said,

"You read so beautifully, cousin, that I wish you to read to me the prayers for the dying. It would too severely task the feelings of my poor Adèle, to ask this service of her."

Evelyn looked toward Dr. Germain, and he whispered,

"It is best to humor her fancy. All hope is not lost, though it is not safe to refuse any thing she wishes."

Philip took the prayer book which Adèle silently offered, and, with reverence and feeling, performed the required service, while the rest of the group responded. The lips of the sick girl moved, but no sound issued from them. When he finished she said,

"Thank you—and now, Cousin Philip, receive my last adieu, with my earnest injunction to watch over and console those who are dear to me. Remain with my father, and become to him as a son."

"If I can serve him in any manner, dear Pauline, rest assured that I will cling to his side as long as he wishes it."

"Thank you—I can not ask for more. Time will show how great will be your reward. My sister, my kind aunt,

cherish me in your hearts, but do not mourn for the happy one who has thus early escaped the burden of mortality to live in that higher sphere in which my mother will joyfully welcome her child. Dearest father, let that thought console you for the loss of your Pauline."

Mr. Harrington only replied by clasping her more closely to his heart, and casting on Dr. Germain a troubled look of inquiry. He replied to it in a faint whisper,

"She can not bear contradiction. Sleep approaches gradually. She may die in it, or she may awake to renewed life. I have done all that human skill can accomplish, and we must leave the result to God."

The father bowed his head in submission, and fixed his gaze upon the pallid features resting upon his breast. As she seemed about to sink into slumber, she unclosed her heavy eyes and murmured,

"Tell *him* that, with my last breath, I forgave him; that I died at peace with all the world."

The eye-lids drooped over the weary eyes, and, save that a faint pulsation of the heart indicated that life still lingered, Pauline lay to all appearance dead. Almost afraid to breathe, Mr. Harrington held her in his arms, and watched her with an intensity of interest no words can portray. In spirit he seemed to behold the silent struggle between the principle of life and that mysterious thing called death; and how fervently he prayed, how reverently he asked help for his stricken one, that she might again be restored to him, was known only to himself and that omnipotent One to whom the deepest emotions of the soul are laid bare.

The remainder of the group sat motionless, watching the mournful tableau made by the father and daughter, and afraid to move lest the spell that seemed to be upon them, should be broken by the approach of death.

Hours that seemed ages, passed away in this terrible watch, and the physician was the only one who had ventured to leave his place. He had at intervals, held his watch over the lips of Pauline to ascertain if breath still issued from them. The faint dimness that appeared each time upon its polished crystal, gave assurance that life yet lingered, but that was all.

Mr. Harrington sat as motionless as if carved from stone, fearful that the slightest movement would break this sleep on which so much depended. This long continued suspense had become almost agonizing, when suddenly the deep stillness was broken by the sound of an eager footstep which came through the house with reckless speed.

Each one recognized the step of Victor, but before any one could rise to meet him he was in the room. A faint murmur of surprise greeted him as he paused in the doorway, and surveyed the scene within. He looked as if he had recently suffered from severe illness himself, for he was pale and wan, and his dress was in a state of remarkable disorder to be worn by so finished an exquisite as young Harrington.

With a hasty gesture toward those who sat near the fire, he approached the bed and silently looked upon the scarcely breathing form his father sustained in his arms, while the working of his features seemed to say,

“Would to God I could exchange places with you, Pau-

line, and bury myself, together with my faults, in the grave which seems yawning for you."

His earnest gaze seemed to possess some magnetic influence on the sick girl, for she moved slightly, and presently unclosed her eyes. Intelligence was in their glance, and after a brief pause, as if collecting her thoughts, she softly said,

"I live—for the loved of earth are yet around me. Victor, my brother, welcome among us once more."

She endeavored to raise her hand, but had not the power to do so. Victor touched it with his lips, and muttered hoarsely,

"Thank God, you will not die, Pauline. I did not know of your danger till last night, when I accidentally met Malcolm, and he told me how ill you have been. I hurried home at every ri—"

He checked himself suddenly, as if he was about to betray more than he intended; and afraid of the effect Malcolm's name thus carelessly uttered, might have on Pauline, Miss Harrington quickly approached, and drew him away. She only drew a long shivering sigh, and requested her father to place her on the pillows, as he must be weary of the constrained position in which he had so long remained.

Mr. Harrington kissed her tenderly, as he said,

"God has given you back to me, my darling. You will live to bless me yet."

"I trust so, best of fathers," and again the weary eye-lids drooped, and she slumbered serenely. Dr. Germain prepared some drops for her when she again awoke, and insisted that

every one should retire for the night, except Miss Gertrude, who would remain to watch beside her niece.

Exhausted by previous fatigue, Adèle consented to seek repose on a lounge which was drawn near the fire; but she would by no means agree to leave the room while her sister's life hung on so precarious a thread.

Worn out as Mr. Harrington was by the varied emotions he had passed through during the evening, he felt the impossibility of sleeping before ascertaining from Victor the history of the few past weeks of his life. There was much that was painful to hear he well knew, even before seeing him, for the impress of suffering upon his son's features, had told its own tale of reckless misery to the father's yearning heart.

Mr. Harrington found Victor in the usual sitting-room of the family, cowering over a few embers left from the neglected fire of the previous day. He placed the light he carried, on a table, so as to throw its glare on the wasted features of the young man, and seated himself opposite to him in silence.

Victor eyed him half sullenly at first, but there was something in his father's face that gradually melted the feeling of rebellious obstinacy which had lately ruled his heart. He felt that compassion for himself was in the gaze bent on him, and not that spirit of questioning accusation he had expected to meet. He also saw how much his father had suffered of late, for old age seemed to have made rapid inroads on the features which, a few months since, were bright with health and happiness.

"Have you been ill, father?" he asked.

"Only in mind, my son. You know how I have suffered on Pauline's account ; and added to that, was my uncertainty concerning you. Where have you been during these dark days, Victor, while my heart was torn with anxiety for you?"

"Wait until to-morrow, father, and I will tell you all. To-night you need rest—and the tale I have to tell will hardly promote slumber," he bitterly replied.

"I can not sleep until I have heard it, Victor. Let me know the worst at once ; speak the whole truth, my son, as if you were laying bare your heart before Heaven, for I promise you not to judge you harshly."

Victor walked the floor hurriedly to and fro, and a struggle was evidently going on within him. He seemed endeavoring to summon courage to obey his father ; at length he paused before him, and said,

"I am indeed the returned prodigal, father ; and I bring not alone myself and my evil nature back to the parental roof, but a list of responsibilities I know you are unable to meet."

"How have they been incurred, Victor?" asked the father, steadily.

"I might deceive you, sir ; but I came home with the purpose of telling all, and I will not shrink from the ordeal. They are gambling debts."

"I feared as much. And what says your aunt ? What will Louise say to such a course?"

An expression of passionate anger came up on his face.

"My aunt ! I could curse that hard woman, did not respect for you withhold me, sir. As to Louise, I am certain she will never consent to marry a man who is not rich, and it

was this belief that sent me to the gaming table, in the mad hope of forcing Fortune to become my friend."

"Sit down, Victor, and tell me your story in a connected manner. I wish to comprehend all the temptations you have had to struggle with."

The calm manner of his father exerted a constraint over Victor that he could not evade. He sat down opposite to Mr. Harrington, and commenced,

✓ "When I left Wavertree for New Orleans, I was deeply in debt, but I would not tell you at that crisis, because I knew your own financial difficulties were then bearing heavily upon you. I hoped to be able to extricate myself gradually by the same means that had involved me. Like a thousand other fools, I imagined that my losses had taught me wisdom, and I could, in my turn, break the bank in the saloon where I had lost so much. My aunt showed me unequivocally that unless I possessed money I should never gain Louise; and she, too, flirted before my face with a man whose only recommendation in her eyes, is the possession of wealth. Day by day, I grew more reckless, and more resolute to risk every thing to gain what I had lost. The little employment given me at Messrs. Hall, afforded me the leisure to devote the greater portion of my time to the pursuit which so deeply fascinated me; at first, I won so largely that I paid off all the debts of honor which had given me so much uneasiness. Ah! if I had only stopped there! but the delusive hope of continued good fortune led me on. I knew my aunt was not the kind of woman to be scrupulous about the method by which money was gained, provided a man possessed it;



and I rushed more madly than ever into the excitement of gambling. I made Louise magnificent presents, and again she smiled on me more encouragingly than on Nevin. In short, I went on with various alternations of fortune, until about a week since, when I resolved at one blow to know what my fate was to be. I risked every thing I possessed, and many thousands more; that I am here, and thus, shows you the result."

"Where have you been since you left the employment of Messrs. Hall?" asked Mr. Harrington.

"In hell," responded Victor, impetuously, "for those infamous gambling saloons have been well named thus. I have played until I was nearly maddened, but the fates were ever against me. A gleam of good fortune was invariably followed by greater losses than my previous gains would cover."

"What finally tore you from this infatuation, Victor?"

"One night, when I was nearly frenzied with my ill luck, Malcolm came into the room, and seemed surprised to see me there. He spoke to me, and asked me if I knew that Pauline's life was despaired of? I had not lately inquired for letters from home, for I could not bear to think of those who expected me to act so differently from the course I was pursuing.

"I had just lost the last stake my credit enabled me to raise, and I left the house bankrupt in every thing; for I had lost more than I was ever likely to possess the means of paying. I got on the first boat that left New Orleans, and came home."

"Thank Heaven! you are once more safe beneath my own roof-tree," said Mr. Harrington, fervently. "And now tell me, my son, what is the amount of your debts?"

Victor shrank from naming the sum, but his father's eye enforced his demand in a manner inexplicable to himself. He said,

"I arose from the table fifteen thousand dollars in debt."

This far exceeded his father's utmost estimate, but he felt that this was no time to reproach him with his cruel want of principle. Harshness now might plunge him down the precipice on the brink of which he trembled. He sighed heavily, as he said,

"You have suffered enough, Victor, to show you all the error of your ways, if you will only lay the lesson to heart. I trust the remorse you must now feel will complete the reformation of which your return home would indicate the commencement. Sleep in peace, my son, for you sadly need rest. To-morrow we will discuss the means of extricating you from the sea of debt into which you have so unhappily plunged."

"Will you indeed do this?" exclaimed the unhappy young man. "Then all for me is not lost. But I thought you could not aid me: that your own embarrassments are too great to give you the power to bestow any assistance on me."

"We will talk of that to-morrow, Victor," replied his father, evasively. "It is now past midnight; let us both seek that rest which we so greatly need."

Selfish and reckless as Victor was, he was touched by his

father's forbearance toward him, and he grasped his hand in both his own, as he said,

"I have no words to thank you, dear sir. I dreaded this meeting more than words can express, but your goodness has lifted a heavy weight from my heart. Your reproaches, added to those of my own conscience, would have been more than I could bear."

"Do not too lightly cast the burden aside, Victor," said Mr. Harrington, seriously; "but let repentance work the reformation I so much desire. Remember that though my heart yearns over you with inexpressible tenderness, that you have dealt upon it the heaviest blow parental pride and affection can receive. I would save you from ruin, my only son, therefore I trampled not upon the bruised reed; but if you could behold the anguish your conduct is causing me, you would shrink from inflicting such suffering on your bitterest foe."

His voice grew tremulous and broken as he uttered these words, and, for the first time, Victor comprehended what self-control his father had imposed on himself in this interview. He carried his hand impetuously to his heart, as he exclaimed,

"Pardon, pardon, best of fathers, and I will endeavor to become all you wish. I will no longer vacillate between good and evil, but walk in the path of rectitude and honor."

"God grant the power to do so, my dear boy," solemnly responded Mr. Harrington, "and I will earnestly pray that He will give you strength to conquer the evil you have suffered to overshadow your youth."

Affected by his father's manner, even more than by his words, Victor bowed reverently before him, as they parted to seek such rest as could be obtained in the agitated state of their minds.

Victor soon slept, for he was young and weary, and his light unimpressible nature was not one to retain long any unpleasant weight. The fear of his father's displeasure gone, and in its place the certainty that his difficulties would be removed, his spirits rebounded at once, and all the anguish and debasement of the few past weeks of his life were thrust aside, as an unpleasant memory to be dwelt on as little as possible.

From such a being, little could be hoped in the future ; and it was this fear which weighed heaviest on the already overtasked heart of the father. While Victor slept in peace, Mr. Harrington lay upon his restless pillow, revolving in his own mind the story he had just heard, and endeavoring to arrange some plan to extricate his son from his difficulties, without loss of honor.

How this was to be done, he could not yet see ; for, added to his previous embarrassments, these debts seemed like the last feather's weight that was to crush him down. Toward morning he fell into a brief and unrefreshing slumber, from which he awoke to new cares and sorrows.

## CHAPTER XX.

WHEN Malcolm reached New Orleans, his first object was to see a Jewish dealer in securities with whom he had sometimes transacted business through the intervention of Withers. He intended to place in this man's possession the note which Mr. Harrington had given him for the sum secured by a mortgage on the Wavertree plantation. Bondy had already served him faithfully in several instances where he did not wish his own name to be brought forward, in transactions that might sully the fair reputation he was so anxious to maintain among men of liberal feeling and unblemished integrity.

Malcolm received constant information from Wavertree concerning the condition of Pauline, from Dr. Germain, to whom, on his departure, he had addressed a note expressed in such terms as to induce the unsuspecting physician to suppose him warmly interested in her recovery. Unwilling to give pain, Dr. Germain had, even when almost hopeless himself, given Malcolm cause to believe that her illness would not prove fatal.

With this conviction, the transient softness that played about the heart of the schemer, while he believed her dying for his sake, was succeeded by the stern determination to

make her father feel that his grasp of iron was on his fortune, and from it there was no avenue of escape.

On the third evening after his return to the city, he prepared to seek the Jew: and with a strong feeling of repugnance, he proceeded to the same house in which the murder of the unhappy Withers had taken place. After that terrible catastrophe, the place had remained untenanted, until Bondy, the former friend of the murdered man, applied to the owner for it. He was glad to let him have it at a merely nominal rent, for no one else had been found willing to reside in it on any terms.

Bondy had been in possession of the place only a few weeks, and this was the first time Malcolm had found occasion to visit him since his removal. The night was cold, and a slight mist filled the atmosphere with a chilling vapor, that seemed like breathings from a charnel-house to him who hurried along with his fancy filled with the ghastly memories linked with the place he was about to visit.

When he reached it, he knocked long and loudly upon the door before any one responded. At length a shuffling step approached, and after demanding who was there several times, Bondy recognized the voice of his visitor, and admitted him.

"Do you often freeze your clients in such weather as this, Mr. Bondy, by keeping them parleying as long as you have talked with me before unclosing your inhospitable door?" he asked, in an angry tone.

"Excuse me, sir; but you know this place has not the best reputation, and it is always safest to use a little caution. I

had no idea it was you, sir; for I thought you had gone up the river to visit some friends. Pray walk in, and make yourself welcome."

While he thus spoke, the Jew ushered his visitor into the same room with which he was so familiar. It was scarcely altered in its outward aspect; a bright coal fire burned in the grate, and a solar lamp also shed its cheerful light around. The blood-stained carpet had been removed, and one of commoner texture, but of brilliant hues, substituted. The remainder of the furniture was the same, though Malcolm remarked that not a single piece occupied the same position as in former days. A French bedstead in one corner of the apartment had been added to the accommodations, and the door leading into the adjoining room was concealed by a curtain.

Malcolm looked around, almost expecting to see the dark face of Withers start up before him, and his host seemed to understand what was passing in his mind; he said,

"You're thinking of the old days, Mr. Malcolm, when Withers used to meet you on this spot. That was a dreadful business, sir—dreadful."

"I do not know how you can bear to live in a place desecrated by such a crime," replied Malcolm, looking curiously at the ugly dark face of the young Jew, and wondering in his own mind what manner of man he could be.

"You see, sir, no body offered to take the house, and the owner was glad to let me have it almost for nothing, to keep it from from falling to ruin. I have a nice little garden back here that my office-boy keeps in order, besides raising early

vegetables in it, which the keeper of the restaurant near is glad to get in payment of the little I eat."

"All that may be very well, but are you never nervous when sitting here alone? Do you not often involuntarily look around, expecting to see the spectre of the murdered man near you?"

"Hush sir, do not suggest such fancies," replied Bondy, with a repressed shiver. "I try not to think of those things. It is to my interest to stay here, and I have taught myself to make every thing bend before that."

"Hum—that is the creed of your race, I believe."

The Jew's face darkened. "Not more than of yours, I think, sir. It would be hard to find a keener hand at self-interest than the man we have just spoken of, and he was no Jew."

"You are right there, Bondy. Forget that I spoke thus, for I assure you I have a very sincere respect for the house of Israel. I came hither to-night to trust to the management of one of its sons an affair of delicacy and importance, which I am sure he can conduct for me in a satisfactory manner."

Bondy listened eagerly. He said,

"I am at your service, Mr. Malcolm. Only inform me of what you wish done, and if it is in my power, it shall be accomplished."

"I think you have greatly enlarged your business of late?" inquired the visitor.

The Jew slightly changed countenance.

"Why—yes—since the death of Withers, I have fallen heir to much of his business. I knew many of his employers,



and in fact, often attended to affairs for him. This naturally led to my stepping as it were, into his shoes. In fact, that was one reason for taking the old place; people had been accustomed to come here for a real estate broker, and—”

“There is no need of an enumeration of all your reasons for selecting such an abode, Bondy,” said Malcolm, carelessly. “You were certainly free to act as you chose in that matter, and it is no concern of mine. All I care about just at present is to avail myself of your talent for business.”

“Very well, sir; we understand each other; so let us proceed to business at once. I am at your service.”

Malcolm drew forth his pocket-book, and took from it several papers carefully tied together. He proceeded to state to his eager listener, in clear and concise language, the trust he wished to repose in him. When he had finished, Bondy mused a few moments, and then asked,

“Do you wish to ruin this man utterly?”

“I wish to make him feel that poverty impends over him, and will certainly fall and crush him, unless I choose to save him.”

“Has he injured you,” asked the Jew, curiously.

“That, I imagine, has nothing to do with the business in hand,” replied Malcolm, haughtily.

“I beg your pardon. I was indiscreet. I must then proceed to foreclose this mortgage without delay.”

“You may save appearances, by giving him notice that in two weeks you will proceed according to law. I am certain that he can not raise the money to pay you in that time. You may almost make your fortune out of this job, Bondy;

for I do not care so much for the money at stake, as for the power the loss of fortune gives me over one I wish to bend to my will. It is a business in which I do not wish my name mixed up, and since you will take the entire responsibility, you can charge such commissions as your conscience will sanction."

The Jew's face brightened, and he rubbed his hands together joyfully, as he replied,

"You are a gentleman that knows how to act liberally toward those that serve you, Mr. Malcolm. I will proceed immediately according to your directions, so pray give them to me in your usual clear manner; I will jot them down on this paper, that I may be sure of following them to the letter."

An hour was consumed by the pair, in arranging the most minute details of the proposed proceedings against Mr. Harrington, and then Malcolm arose to depart, feeling far from comfortable in his own mind; but resolved to stifle every emotion of compassion toward the ruined family, until his own object was gained.

Bondy obsequiously attended him to the door, and after carefully barring and bolting it, he returned to his room. As he entered it alone, he cast around a half scared glance, as if he almost expected to behold some supernatural appearance within: but seeing every thing looking as usual, he quickly entered and closed the door after him. He stood before the fire nervously working his fingers together as he muttered,

"If people only knew all, they might well wonder that I can live here; can *sleep* here, where—"

He glanced around with dilating eyes, and then continued,

"But *I* need not fear. *I* did not kill him. I did not even wish to have his blood spilled, but Wilkins was compelled to take his life in self-defense; hugh! how he struggled for it, poor devil. After all, it was only a fight, in which he came off the loser. I need not be afraid to live here, for I had not half as great a grudge against him then as I have now, for hiding that money where I can never find it. I would n't care much if his ghost would come back, provided it would come to tell me where the fifty thousand is concealed."

Here his eyes roved round the walls of the room, as if in restless search of a clew to what he firmly believed was concealed somewhere in the old house. This conviction had overcome his repugnance to the idea of inhabiting a spot so long occupied by one whom he had seen deprived of life. Bondy had carelessly examined the papers left by Withers, and he had found no clew to the disposal of the money, such as had presented itself to the more astute mind of Malcolm. He believed that the murdered man had contrived some secret place in which the large sum which had tempted the robbers to enter the house yet lay in safety; and night after night, with a determination of purpose and hardness of feeling it is difficult to conceive, he sounded the walls in the unused rooms, and pryed up the floors to find the imaginary place of concealment.

Several hours every night were consumed in this fruitless employment, until it had become a species of mania with

him. After carefully putting away the papers Malcolm had left with him, he replenished his fire, that it might burn brightly on his return, lighted a dark lantern, and started on his nightly round.

With a shiver he could not repress, the Jew ascended the dusky staircase, and entered the mouldy rooms above. They had been left to the occupation of the bats so long, that their desolation offered a striking contrast to the bright and cheerful-looking apartments below. With a dogged perseverance worthy of a better cause, Bondy took a long staff from a corner, and sounded every part of the wall and floor.

One portion returned a hollow echo he had never before remarked, and, with almost maniac haste, he seized a chisel from a basket of tools he carried on his arm, and tore open a space in the old and rotten plaster. It scattered around him in a stifling shower, but he heeded it not: greed and avarice were raging in his heart, and he hearkened to no other voice. A mocking void met his view, and, with imprecations at his ill success, he hurled the tools upon the floor, and retired to the room below.

After locking himself in there, he eyed the curtain which concealed the entrance to the next apartment, and muttered,

"I wish I dared go in there, where I saw his ghastly face, as Wilkins gave him the finishing blow. But I dare not—maybe I'd find him there gibbering over the blood upon the floor, which was his own life. If I thought he'd tell me what he did with the money, I believe I'd stand even that. I'll find out yet—I know I will."

He drew near the curtain, but just as he was about to grasp and pull it aside, a sudden gust of wind blew it toward him, and he recoiled as if expecting to see the hueless face of the murdered man emerge from it. A moment's reflection restored him to composure, and, with a half sneer on his face, he said,

"On second thoughts, I'll take daylight for that room. It's an ugly customer any way. If old Withers is in there, I would n't care to see him, unless I was sure he would give me the information I seek. A wretch like him would scarcely do that; so I believe I will let him alone for the present."

He sat before the fire until he felt overcome with drowsiness, and then, removing his boots, he made a single spring into the bed with all his clothing on, and rolled the covering around him, so as to shut out both light and sound.

He was soon wrapped in a deep sleep; the lamp continued to burn throughout the night, and the capacious chair in which Withers once sat, remained in front of the glowing fire. If the invisible spirit of the murdered man lingered about his old abiding place, it must have scowled upon the comfortable appliances of his sleeping enemy.

## CHAPTER XXI.

AFTER brief and broken slumbers, Mr. Harrington arose, and visited the room of his daughter to learn how she had passed the latter portion of the night. He found her sleeping calmly, while Adèle had taken the place of watcher beside her. Pauline was evidently better, but Adèle was struck with a new apprehension, as she looked upon her father's altered features. She whispered,

"What is the matter, father? Has Victor given you additional trouble? Ah! this fear kept me awake last night, long after I laid down to rest."

"It is a trouble that money can remedy, my love," he replied. "Let it not be a weight on your young spirits; keep their brightness, my darling, as long as you may."

"But—but—will not this add to your recent embarrassments? Ah! how could my brother be so thoughtless!—so cruel?"

"Hush, Adèle. Youth is ever prone to temptation, and we must not judge him too hardly. Kindness may save your brother yet; but harshness will surely drive him to destruction. It is imperatively necessary that I leave for New Orleans to-day, and I came hither to see if the condition of Pauline is such, as to permit me to leave her."

"My sister is evidently much better; the doctor was in here a little while since, and he says, with careful nursing, we shall now bring her through safely."

"Thank God, for this great mercy, even amid other troubles," said the father, fervently.

With wearied looks, the family assembled around a late breakfast. Though all felt that a great weight was lifted by the convalescence of Pauline, there was still a nameless dread on the score of Victor; but he seemed the only one unconscious of any cause of care. He was refreshed by several hours of sound sleep, and he arose with renewed buoyancy of spirits, produced by the agreeable conviction that he need take no further heed for the liquidation of his debts, since his father had so kindly assumed the responsibility of providing for their payment. With the emotion and suffering of the past night, all his repentance seemed to have departed.

It was the first time himself and Evelyn had met, and he carried on as animated a conversation with their young guest, as though no sorrow had ever marred his happiness. Mr. Harrington sighed over this apparent want of sensibility, and feared it augured ill for the reformation he so earnestly desired.

As they were rising from the table, a servant came in with letters, and Mr. Harrington found that two among them were for himself. One was from New Orleans, and the address was written in a hand entirely new to him. On glancing over its contents, he found it to be a formal notification from a Jewish broker in the city, that in ten days from the date of his communication, the mortgage on Wavertree which had

been given to Malcolm, and transferred by that gentleman to the writer, would be foreclosed; unless the advance of fifty thousand dollars was promptly paid, together with the costs of the proceedings against himself.

"He has indeed lost no time," thought the sorely-pressed man. "Ten days! have I a friend on earth, who in that limited time, would advance so large a sum for me? I fear not; and Malcolm evidently thinks the same, or he would not have hurried thus."

He retired to his own apartment to ponder on his position, and seek for some resource which would enable him to stave off the ruin that threatened him. He saw but one avenue by which he could extricate himself, and that he shrank from, because, to his honorable mind, it involved a seeming breach of trust. As the guardian of Mrs. Ruskin's children, the sum of forty thousand dollars belonging to them, was placed absolutely in his power, until the youngest child came of age, or until Louise married.

This money Mr. Harrington knew he could use for his own benefit, and the children could not ultimately be losers, for even in the event of disaster to himself, his property was worth far more than the claims against him, if purchased at a fair valuation. On the other hand, he knew Mrs. Ruskin too well to risk any thing belonging to her or hers without possessing ample security for its replacement at a moment's warning; besides, Louise might marry any day, and in all probability would accept Nevin, now all hope of a union with Victor was at an end. Thus only a temporary release would be afforded him, and he would only risk what his conscience



condemned, to produce no real benefit in the end. There was one thing in his favor: his crop promised to be unusually large this year, and if he could only secure it, and transfer it to the hands of his commission merchants, they would, in all probability, be willing to make a considerable advance on it, if he stated his exact position to them. Should that hope fail him, through some unforeseen misfortune, he felt that the old home must go; the spot which was as dear to his heart as the very life-blood that flowed in it, must become the property of strangers, and he must seek an humbler shelter for his declining years. But he dwelt on this sombre picture but a few moments; with his usual sanguine spirit, he began to count the chances in his favor, and left the others to take care of themselves.

Having summoned Victor to the library, where he spent the greater portion of the morning in arranging his future plans, Mr. Harrington impatiently awaited his appearance. His son came in from the amusement of shooting at a mark—a trial of skill to which he had challenged Evelyn immediately after breakfast. He looked animated and cheerful, but his face grew sensibly graver as he beheld the serious expression of his father.

Mr. Harrington motioned him to a seat, which he rather unwillingly took.

“Sit down, Victor, and listen quietly to me. The afternoon packet takes me to New Orleans in a few hours, to attend to important business of my own. While there, I wish to make an effort to extricate you from the difficulties in which you are involved.”

"Thank you, sir."

"Do not thank me yet, Victor," said his father, coldly. "I am sorry to see you so indifferent to what, at your age, I should have felt as a disgrace."

"Why, father, I have only done what others of my station do every day. I was unlucky, and—"

"And you risked what you knew you had not the means of paying, sir. But we will not now discuss this painful subject—a great change must take place in you before such a discussion could be beneficial. I wish to learn from you to whom the greater portion of the sums lost by you are owing?"

Victor was offended, and he sullenly replied,

"About five thousand are due to individuals. The remainder to the proprietors of the house."

"From that fact I judge that it has long been a place of resort for you; they would scarcely have permitted a stranger to become so largely indebted to them. They supposed you the son of a rich man, and, therefore, helped you on to ruin."

"Of course they knew my prospects," said Victor, coolly, "and they believed you would come to the rescue, as you have already promised to do. As I said before, I have only done what all young men of spirit do every day."

"We will waive the discussion of that, if you please; you are already in possession of my sentiments on the subject of gambling. I consider it the foundation of nearly every vice, for it opens every avenue to temptation. Five thousand dollars, then, I shall consider the maximum of your debts, for I

shall not pay the obliging proprietors of the tables at all ; and they may consider themselves fortunate to escape a prosecution. If I had time to attend to it, I believe I would take up the cause of society, and endeavor to cast such insatiable leeches from its bosom."

Victor looked extremely crest-fallen. He said,

"I shall feel myself dishonored by such a proceeding, sir. I shall never again dare to hold up my head in my own set."

"So much the better, if your set habitually frequent such places. O, my son, my son, is this the end of all my care? Of all the fond hopes that once centered in you?"

Victor made no reply to this appeal, but sat looking gloomily out of the window, apparently unconscious of the wounded spirit breathed in the reproachful tones of his father's voice. Mr. Harrington gazed mournfully upon him, and after a pause said,

"Look at me, Victor. Can you not mark the change that mental uneasiness has wrought upon me within the last few months? Are you not fully aware that financial embarrassments have caused this? Can you, then, ask me to take upon myself the additional burden of a large debt, incurred as this has been?"

"I should not, perhaps, have expected it, sir, if you had not intimated some such intention last night."

"You misunderstood me, then. I knew at the time, that it was impossible for me to think of discharging the whole amount. It was, therefore, a relief to me, when you said that

the larger portion is due to the keepers of the house. Those who live by the fraud and ruin of others, I do not scruple to deal with according to their merits."

"I shall be dishonored by it, at all events," responded Victor, gloomily. "There is but one code among men of honor."

"Honor!" repeated his father. "A shameful desecration of the word it is, to use it thus. I care very little what estimate such men put on you—and if you are compelled, by my acts, to hold yourself aloof from them, I shall rejoice that it is so. Since you have proved yourself so weak, I think it best that you, in future, remain at Wavertree. I am afraid the attempt you made to do something for yourself, before encumbering yourself with a wife, was a most unwise thing for you. Your Aunt Ruskin will hardly consent to give you Louise now."

"I do not believe she ever meant to give her to me, after she found that you had met with heavy losses. That little flirt is to be the cause of my ruin yet."

"How do you mean?"

"Only this—that if Louise finally disappoints me, I shall be good for nothing, I know I shall. I believe I would make an effort to retrieve myself, if my cousin was to be my reward."

"Are you then mad enough still to cherish hope in that quarter?"

"I must do so, as long as Louise is single; and if she marries another, I believe I will shoot myself."

These words were uttered with a reckless air of desperation,

which made his father regard him more seriously than ever. He sternly asked,

“And would you dare to consummate your own eternal ruin thus?”

“What would I then have to live for? I tell you, father, I have been on the eve of doing this more than once during the past few weeks, and if things go on so contrary with me again, I do not believe I can answer for myself.”

Mr. Harrington was appalled by the coolness with which he spoke of self-destruction. He asked with emotion,

“Victor, have you ever reflected on the suicide's fate, after death?”

“I suppose it will be much like that of the majority of mankind, if we give implicit faith to what the preachers say; for they literally make it as hard for any man to enter the kingdom of heaven, as for the camel to pass through the eye of a needle.”

“My son, on a subject of such vital importance to every living being, I scarcely expected so flippant an answer from you. I request that in my absence, you will read such books as Philip Evelyn can recommend to you, and reflect seriously upon their contents. When I return, I trust that I may find you in a more promising state of mind.”

“So Evelyn preaches, does he? I half suspected as much from his looks,” replied Victor, contemptuously. “Thank you, sir; but when I take up the study of theology I shall seek a wiser tutor than he is likely to be.”

“I would to God that you only resembled him; then I might indeed be proud to call you son.”

"I am flattered, sir, that you estimate another so much more highly than you do me," replied the perverse Victor, flushing angrily. "You had better claim this paragon for your son, in reality. Either of my sisters, I fancy, he would be glad to take for a wife; only Pauline is bespoke for Malcolm, I suppose; and Adèle is a deuced deal too handsome to be given to a canting, Methodistical youngster, like this Evelyn."

"You speak too freely, sir," said Mr. Harrington, rebukingly, "and you do not seem to be yet aware that all intimacy between Mr. Malcolm and my family is at an end."

Victor looked really astonished. He asked,

"And Pauline? What did his attentions to her, mean? What caused this illness? Ah! I begin to see a gleam of light: have you refused your consent, sir, and caused all this suffering to my sister?"

"It matters not now. Suffice it, that Malcolm is no longer a suitor to my daughter. Furnish me with a list of your debts, and the persons to whom they are due, that I may see what can be done toward settling them before I return home again."

This command Victor ungraciously obeyed, and after his father had placed the memoranda in his pocket-book, the young man discontentedly said,

"After living in such a round of excitement as my life has been since my return from college, how do you think I can stand this humdrum place, sir? with no life in it—nothing going on as it used to? I shall perish of ennui here."

"I shall exceedingly regret to find that you have no re-

sources within yourself. Fish, shoot, hunt, work, read—in short, there is plenty to do, if you will only occupy yourself with healthful and natural pursuits.”

“All tiresome, and ruinous to the hands and the complexion, except reading; and of that I am not particularly fond. Was too regularly bored with it at college.”

Mr. Harrington's patience was exhausted.

“Victor,” he sternly said, “leave me alone, and give me no further cause to-day, to wish that you had never been born. God forgive me for losing my temper; but you really do contrive to wound and exasperate me beyond endurance. Such as Wavertree is, it is your home, and you must make the best of it, since you can no longer afford the means to follow your heartless career of city dissipation.”

“I obey you, sir: but pray tell Louise from me, that if she marries Nevin, I will shoot him first, and myself afterward.”

“I shall deliver no such absurd message,” replied Mr. Harrington, now really angry with his flippant son. “I shall tell her if she values happiness or respectability, never to marry a man who has respect for nothing on earth; not even the gray hairs of his own father.”

Victor arose, and with a more serious manner than he had hitherto assumed, said,

“Father, I do respect them, but you do not make due allowance for the condition of my mind. I am ruined, therefore, I am reckless; but I am in solemn earnest about Louise. I have sworn that I will never live to see her the wife of another, and I never will.”

He rushed from the room, and in a few more moments

was seen plunging across the yard with heedless speed. Deeply discomfited by his words, Mr. Harrington remained in unpleasant musing several moments, and then went to his daughters' apartment to bid them farewell.

Pauline was awake, and smiled faintly upon him as he came in.

"You must leave me?" she found voice to say.

"Yes, my darling, but not for long. Your illness has already interfered with business that admits of no further delay. Make haste to get well, and let me find you almost blooming on my return."

A shadow flitted over her wan face, and her lips trembled with emotion. Making an effort to repress her feelings, she whispered,

"I will try to live, for your sake. Dear father, tell me, is your business connected with—with—"

She could not pronounce the name, but Mr. Harrington understood her, and evasively replied,

"I shall not have occasion to see Malcolm in settling our affairs. He has transferred his accounts to another. Suffice it, my love, that I *can* settle with him."

"Thank Heaven!" and she closed her eyes to keep back the tears that would come, as she remembered how differently she had once felt concerning her father's indebtedness to Malcolm.

A melancholy household was left after Mr. Harrington's departure. Victor, self-absorbed, and careless of the feelings of others, wandered alone in the forest many hours of every day; he seemed to take no interest in attending to the busi-



ness of the plantation, which afforded his father so many pleasant and healthful hours of exercise in the open air. He made no effort to follow any rational employment that could have afforded occupation to his mind, and prevented it from dwelling on the probability that in the wreck of his worldly prospects, he had lost all chance of ever gaining Louise.

His only employment was smoking cigars, and to such excess did he carry their use, that his health was seriously affected by it. To Miss Gertrude's remonstrances he turned a deaf ear, and to her dismay he added another habit even more injurious to his future welfare. Day after day at dinner, he drank so much wine as to stupefy him for the remainder of the afternoon. He would not listen to the affectionate warning his aunt ventured to utter, and she impatiently awaited the return of his father, in the hope that his influence would stay the rapid downward career the unhappy young man seemed determined to run.

Evelyn followed the usual routine to which he had been accustomed before the departure of his old friend, and he vainly endeavored to interest Victor in pursuits he found so congenial to his healthy and active mind. Unfortunately Victor had taken a dislike to him, and refused all overtures of intimacy in such a manner, as finally to induce Philip to confine his intercourse with him to mere civility. Thus the influence from which Mr. Harrington had hoped so much for his perverse son, was negatived.

Miss Gertrude and Adèle, confined themselves chiefly to the sick room of Pauline, in attendance on her. After her father's departure, an unfavorable change took place, and a

low nervous fever settled over her, the offspring, doubtless, of her state of mind. Days of wordless suffering passed away, in which a sound, a sudden motion, was agony to her. She struggled heroically to regain the mastery of her own sensations, but the shattered physical system seemed as if it would never regain its proper equilibrium.

This excessive bodily weakness added intensely to the sufferings of the mind, and there were hours of such darkness, such utter mental prostration, that death itself often seemed preferable to the boon of continued existence, now the brightest hope of life was forever extinguished.

## CHAPTER XXII.

TIME wears on, whether wearily or happily, and at length a slight amendment in the health of Pauline took place. She could once more sit up, looking the pale shadow of her former self; and then came a new phase in the condition of her mind, that disgusted herself.

As she slowly mended, a degree of irritability of temper manifested itself, to the surprise of all around her. She had always been mild and conciliating to every one, but now, the restless unhappiness that preyed on her, seemed to have destroyed all power of self-control. Trifles she would not once have noticed, often irritated her, and then ashamed of her own impatience with those who were so kind and considerate toward her, she would weep so violently as to alarm her affectionate nurses.

Evelyn read to her an hour every day, after she recovered sufficiently to desire it; but he was compelled to be extremely cautious in his selection of books. Poetry or works of fiction, in which she had once taken great pleasure, excited emotions that threatened to destroy the little tranquillity she had regained. He generally commenced with reading the Psalm for the day, and then books of travel; or essays filled the remainder of the time.

A new and wide realm of thought was opened to both sisters by the valuable writings of the British Essayists; and Adèle often found herself involuntarily laying down her sewing, and gazing upon the expressive features of the reader, with an interest that made her deeply blush when she became conscious of it.

When Evelyn gave utterance to some sentence that particularly pleased him, he seemed naturally to look toward Adèle for sympathy—for Pauline listened with closed eyes, as she lay back in her large invalid chair, and the careful aunt was generally too busily engaged with her sewing to do any thing more than listen intelligently.

Many were the glances thus exchanged, which had a far deeper meaning than either dreamed; though each was fully aware that the society of the other became more attractive every day. Philip looked forward to that hour as the brightest in the twenty-four; and Adèle caught herself listening for his step each morning, as the time for him to come in drew near.

At the end of two weeks Mr. Harrington came back to Wavertree, looking more cheerful than those he had left behind dared to hope. He informed them that, with the assistance of the senior partner in the house that received his crops, he had been enabled to settle his affairs on a more satisfactory footing, and he was no longer in the power of Malcolm. This was a joyful announcement to Adèle, and Pauline also felt that her mind was relieved of a great weight. One of the most fruitful sources of anguish to her, had been the thought that the man to whom her heart would

not become indifferent, was the hard and merciless creditor of her father.

Mr. Harrington did not explain to her the ungenerous use made of his note by Malcolm, and he rather enjoyed the idea of the amazement and rage that gentleman must have felt, when he found that his intended prey had escaped him. That his finely-spun web had been for naught, as his victim seemed to have torn it away as easily as Gulliver freed himself from the fetters of the Lilliputians. No meeting took place between himself and Malcolm as the kindness of Mr. Hall, when he fully understood the position of his old friend, enabled him to settle with the Jew without reference to him.

To Victor, Mr. Harrington brought no consolation. Louise was as gay and fond of admiration as ever, and Mrs. Ruskin quite decided that the matrimonial aspirations of her nephew should be completely crushed. She spoke confidentially to Mr. Harrington of the attentions of Nevin to her daughter, and informed him that she looked forward with certainty to a union between them before very long.

Mr. Harrington remembered the looks and words of his son on their last interview, when he spoke of his false love; but he could not urge the claims of one who had proved so untrue to himself as the unhappy Victor; and he merely suggested to the mother that it would probably be best for all parties to permit Louise to enjoy her youth a little longer, before putting on the shackles of matrimony. This advice was not agreeable to Mrs. Ruskin's views, and nothing remained for the father, but to advise Victor to stifle his hopes,

and apply himself to some absorbing pursuit, to drive from his heart the memory of his blighted affections.

But unhappily Victor was not made of the materials to succeed in any struggle. Unstable as water, self-indulgence had been his creed so long, that when real sorrow came on him, he was no better fitted to cope with it than the dead autumn leaf is to resist the blast which whirls it to the ground.

He pondered on his father's information until his jealous heart could endure no more. About a week after Mr. Harrington's return, Victor left Wavertree in the night. The next morning one of the servants brought his master a note, which the young gentleman had intrusted to him at the moment of his departure. In great disturbance, Mr. Harrington read the following lines :

"Father, I can not live at Wavertree. I should either become a reckless sot or a madman. I have decided on leaving, and, I warn you, it will be useless to seek me. As Victor Harrington I will no longer be known, until I have either redeemed myself, or gone to destruction. In the latter case, I may reveal my identity in my dying moments, that you may learn through others of the fate of the son who has always been a source of uneasiness to you.

"I ask nothing from you, for you have already done more for me than the condition of your own affairs warranted. I am not quite destitute, for I can raise a small sum of money from the jewelry I once took a silly pride in decking myself with. I also have a resource aside from that, by which I,

hope to acquire a support; but I shall not betray to you what it is.

"Judge me as leniently as you can, for I feel that I am the cause of trouble to all connected with me.

"Your unhappy

"VICTOR."

Deeply pained, and humiliated was Mr. Harrington by this desertion; and in spite of his son's prohibition, he caused his friends in New Orleans to make diligent inquiry after him. When they failed, a police officer was employed to discover his place of concealment; but Victor at least possessed sufficient ingenuity to baffle them all; for his whereabouts remained a profound mystery to those most deeply interested in his welfare.

Had Mr. Harrington been in the habit of examining the theatrical announcements, he might have found a clew in one which speedily appeared in the city papers. It ran thus:

"Mr. Julian St. George, a young English gentleman of aristocratic connections, and fine musical talents, will appear before a New Orleans audience on the twentieth instant; he will give a most accurate imitation of the performances of the most celebrated bugle players in the world, without the use of any instrument. We promise the music-loving public a great treat."

Thus, sooner than endure the monotony of his beautiful home, the prodigal stifled his pride, and under a disguise so skillfully prepared as to baffle even those who had known him most intimately, Victor lived in the midst of the excite-

ment that had become a necessity to his vacant and undisciplined mind. He lodged in the French portion of the city, and when his professional engagements were ended, the greater portion of his time was spent in a gambling-house near his rooms. There the liberal sum he received weekly was soon staked; he played with various success; sometimes he won largely, but when he was encouraged by this gleam of good fortune to risk nearly every thing he possessed on a single cast, he invariably arose a heavy loser.

When not thus employed, he watched the movements of Louise. His passion for her seemed to have assumed the form of a mania, and day after day she received from him the most passionate letters, filled with his despair at the idea of her union with Nevin. At first, the silly vanity of Louise was flattered by these effusions; but gradually they filled her with fear, and also touched her heart as deeply as it was capable of being moved by the anguish of another. She shrank from showing them to her mother, lest Mrs. Ruskin should condemn the unhappy young man more harshly than ever. In her inmost heart Louise felt that Victor had been hardly dealt with, both by herself and her mother. The attentions of Nevin had assumed such a phase as to leave no room to doubt his intentions, and Louise looked into her own heart to discover its true feelings toward him.

She did not for an instant attempt to practice on herself the deception that she cared for any thing more than the worldly advantages she secured by accepting Nevin; and she felt that if Victor Harrington could only afford her a gay home, with sufficient to indulge her fashionable tastes,



even without great wealth, she would not hesitate in her choice.

While in this vacillating state of mind, she received a wild letter from Victor, demanding an interview as a right, and threatening her vaguely if she did not comply with his request. He stated that he should be at the Catholic cemetery at five o'clock in the afternoon of the following day, where she must meet him, or forever repent her refusal.

At first, Louise hesitated; but the romance of the appointment possessed a great charm for her; and there was something in the tone of the letter that made her tremble at the idea of refusing him the meeting he seemed so anxious to have. She owed it to him to grant this earnest request, and hear all he wished to communicate. By seeing him, she could better judge the condition of his mind, and the possibility of a future union between them.

Thus argued Louise, and she was not one to consider either imprudence or risk in such a meeting. She possessed full confidence in her power to baffle the espionage of her mother in such a manner as to escape detection; her only fear was, that by some chance Nevin might become aware of this clandestine meeting, and thus the chance of sharing his wealth would be lost to her. With her acute worldly reasoning, she saw that if Victor was once entirely out of the question, the liberal young Southerner would in all probability be the best match that would ever be offered to her acceptance.

She finally resolved, at all hazards, to meet her cousin; and in that interview decide her own fate irrevocably. Dressing

herself as plainly as possible, she wrapped a large dark shawl around her, and shrouded her features beneath the double folds of a thick green veil ; thus sheltered from recognition by any friend she might chance to meet, she took her way toward the appointed place.

The evening was dark and chilly, and she shivered as she hurried toward the gloomy rendezvous, wondering in her own mind why Victor had selected such a place for their interview. At that day the Catholic cemetery lay beyond the limits of the city, and as one approached them, the miniature temples of death more nearly resembled the pictures of small Chinese pagodas, than mausoleums for Christian burial.

The nature of the soil does not there permit respectable burial in the bosom of mother earth, and vaults of various sizes and shapes, are built in rows like the streets of a miniature city. Around many of these are small flower-beds, as neatly kept as in the most luxuriant garden ; on others are vases daily filled with fresh flowers, even years after the lost one had been laid there in the marble repose of death ; a beautiful and tender tribute, that never fails to touch the heart of the wanderer amid the wilderness of tombs.

Louise drew near the entrance with some misgiving, for the evening was so dreary that she began to fear she would find herself alone in the cemetery with her outraged and half-maddened cousin. She had made but a few steps within the inclosure, and was hesitating whether to advance or retreat, when a figure, that she at first did not recognize as Victor, rushed precipitately from behind a neighboring tomb, and seizing her hand with violence, said,

"I began to fear you would not come; and oh! Louise, if you had not, I should have been desperate—you know not what I might have been tempted to do."

Louise endeavored to extricate her hand from his vice-like grasp, but she might as well have attempted to withstand the force of a whirlwind.

"Why do you grasp me thus?" she asked in alarm; "especially as I am not certain that you are indeed my cousin."

Victor laughed wildly, and the sound rang out startlingly amid the homes of the silent dead.

Louise was shocked, but he did not seem to notice the expression of her face. He exclaimed,

"Not know me, Louise Ruskin! That is as false as your own double-dealing heart. You know there is but one man in this world, who would seek this interview. Look at me, and see if in the wretched being before you, disguised as he may be, you can not at once recognize the man your treachery is killing by slow degrees."

Louise did indeed look at him, and her heart quivered and shrank, as she beheld his burning eyes, his wasted features, and reckless expression. His complexion was artificially darkened, and he wore a wig and false whiskers, several shades lighter than his own hair, but to her vision Victor Harrington stood so clearly revealed, that she wondered how her uncle's emissaries had been so unsuccessful in their search after him.

Her eyes at last met those of Victor, and as she gazed into them, as if spell-bound, all the womanly tenderness that was in her nature was aroused by what she beheld there,

and she burst into tears. As if soothed by this evidence of feeling, Victor gently drew her toward him, until her head rested on his bosom, and she wept till her emotion exhausted itself.

He then led her slowly forward, almost sustaining her steps, until they gained the shelter of a high vault, beside which was a bench shaded by darkly overarching cedars. On this he placed her; and then mournfully regarding her, he said,

"So you can weep for me, Louise, though your own inconsistency, your open encouragement to the hopes of another, are the hardest things I have to bear, unfortunate as I have lately been."

"Oh, Victor, situated as I am, what can I do? Why have you absented yourself from all your friends? Why entered on the disreputable career you must be pursuing. You must know that such conduct only more firmly closes my mother's heart toward you."

"I may, in my turn, ask you what can I do?" replied Victor, disdainfully. "Would you have me bury myself at Waver-tree, where my jealous heart often made me half wild because I could not know what you were doing: could not behold your coquettish face, and know on whom it was smiling most brightly. Louise, God has given me but one strong feeling, and that is, my love for you. If any other impulses possessed the same strength and tenacity, I should be capable of making myself all the pride of my father once hoped I would become. I can not, I *will not* see you given to another; so I bid you beware."

"Of what?" asked Louise, trembling with vague apprehension.

"Of my despair; for I warn you it is as a consuming fire."

"What would you do, Victor?" she faltered.

"God knows. The blackness of darkness hangs between me and the future. What I may be tempted to do, the demon that has so severely tried me, only knows. I might be tempted kill you, Louise, and then destroy myself. Such things have been done by desperate men before to-day."

Louise looked on him, and felt, with increasing fear, that Victor was terribly in earnest. Hers was not a nature to cope with such real and passionate anguish as she beheld written in every line of his countenance, so she again had recourse to tears.

He held both her hands clasped in his, and as the large clear drops fell upon his own, he raised them to his lips, and tenderly kissed them away. At length, he said in a softer tone,

"These tears assure me, Louise, of what I have sometimes doubted; that in your heart I still hold a tender place. Speak—tell me that I am dearer to you than Nevin, or indeed than *any* other."

"I may with truth give you that assurance, dear Victor, though your jealous heart has so cruelly doubted me. I only amuse myself with the admiration of others, but love is a very different thing."

Victor regarded her searchingly, and an expression of softness crossed his features. He asked,

"Will you prove your sincerity, Louise?"

"If I can—the proof you ask may not be in my power."

"It is fully in your power."

"Then let me hear what it is?"

"If I can, in three months from this time, offer you what even you would consider an independence, will you refuse Nevin, in spite of your mother's opposition and unite your fate with mine?"

Louise hesitated. She feared to refuse him, in the excited state in which he evidently was, lest he might perpetrate his threat of taking her life in that solitary spot; she resolved to use craft; and though in her heart there really was no intention of ever giving herself to the reckless-looking being before her, she replied,

"I do not see how you are to gain independence in so brief a period; yet I will not refuse the pledge you ask. If you are successful, I will evade my mother's authority, and—" she paused.

"And marry me?" he eagerly added.

"Yes—and marry you," she slowly repeated, as if the treacherous words were reluctantly wrung from her.

"Eureka!" shouted the excited Victor, in a transport of happiness, as violent as his former anguish had been. "I shall win yet, and baffle my good aunt in her best laid schemes."

"But how?" inquired Louise, with interest. "I do not understand how this sudden independence is to be acquired."

"It is a secret I have just discovered myself," he mysteriously said. "It would be as valuable to me as the philoso-

pher's stone, if I could continue to use it; but I will not tempt fortune too far. I will only make the independence I referred to and then abjure it forever."

"But what is it?" she insisted, with irrepressible curiosity.

Victor drew from his pocket a pack of cards, and dexterously shuffled them, while he said,

"I have puzzled over these many hours, when I should have been sleeping; but I found my reward at last. I am certain that I have discovered an infallible means of winning. See."

And he placed the cards in certain combinations before her, which he rapidly explained; but his words only confused the listener, and when he looked up triumphantly and asked,

"Will not that be simple?" she replied,

"Perhaps so—but gambling for money is very uncertain, as you have already proved."

"Yes—but I did not know the power of these wonderful little bits of paper, then. Now I can turn the scale of fortune so as always to come off winner."

"I hope so, Victor," said Louise, rising. "But I must go—I have already stayed too long. It will be quite dark when I get home, and ma will be offended with me for remaining out so late."

Victor looked on the rapidly darkening air, and reluctantly admitted that she was right. He again took her hands in that iron grasp, and held them firmly, while he looked into her face.

"Swear to be true to me, Louise, by all your hopes of happiness in eternity," he solemnly said.

Louise inwardly shrank from giving such a pledge, but she dared not permit him to see her indecision. She smiled charmingly, and said in her softest tone,

"Trust me, Victor; and I shall love you a thousand times better than if you extorted from me any thing so unfeminine as an oath."

Victor was subdued. He said,

"I *will* trust you, Louise. But fail me at your peril; for I should then become such a being as no laws may bind."

He walked beside her the greater part of the way back, talking in an eager and excited manner, which renewed all her uneasiness; and when he bade her adieu at the corner nearest to her mother's residence, Louise felt as if a great weight was lifted from her heart; and she sped rapidly toward her own home. A servant met her in the hall, who said,

"Mistress has been inquiring for you everywhere, Miss Louise. Mr. Nevin has been in the parlor a good while."

With a quickly beating heart Louise ran up to her own room, and, on entering it, confronted the cold and angry face of her mother. She said,

"Where have you been staying so late? It is quite dark, and there is company already waiting for you."

"I know it, mother. I will be ready in a few minutes."

"That is very likely, with your hair in this condition. Where on earth have you been, to get your curls blown out of order thus?"



"Mother," replied Louise, hurriedly, "I might deceive you, but I will not. I have been to the Catholic cemetery, to meet my cousin Victor, and he detained me till nearly night."

Mrs. Ruskin looked aghast at what seemed a deliberate braving of her authority. Louise took advantage of her speechless anger to go on rapidly,

"I tell you this now that you may at the same time learn that all is at an end between us. He sent me such letters that I was afraid to refuse the meeting he demanded, lest he might be guilty of some violence toward me. The letters are in that drawer—you can read them, if you like. I have seen him, and he is certainly mad. I shall write to my uncle tomorrow, and describe the disguise he wears, that he may be secured, and taken home. Mother, this interview was necessary to the peace of my own mind. I am now convinced that Victor and myself could never be happy together, and I have made up my mind to—"

She paused, and her cheek slightly paled, as the consciousness of her own great treachery to the heart that so earnestly loved her, flashed on her mind. Her mother fully understood what was not expressed, and she half-smiled as she said,

"I am glad that you are at last reasonable. These letters, over which I have scarcely glanced, I see are clearly the productions of insanity. I will send them to my brother. In the meantime, dress yourself most becomingly, while I go down and entertain Mr. Nevin till you appear."

Half an hour later, Louise entered the room in which they sat, attired in a delicately tinted evening dress, and looking

most bewitchingly to him who was impatiently awaiting her. The emotions of the evening had sent a delicate carnation to her cheek, and the quick pulsation of her heart gave unusual brightness to her fine eyes. The flutter of spirits excited by her interview with Victor, imparted softness to her manner, and Nevin was enchanted with her.

Her lover seized the earliest opportunity offered by her mother's absence from the drawing-room, to express his admiration in much stronger language than usual, and ended by making an offer of his heart and hand. They were gracefully but decidedly accepted by the young coquette, who possessed tact enough to comprehend that her present suitor would tolerate no appearance of trifling. She must speak to the point, or lose him for ever.

Between a tear and a sigh Louise Ruskin that night laid her head upon her pillow, the betrothed bride of the man concerning whom she had so recently reassured Victor's fears. She could not sleep, and no wonder. "*He giveth his beloved sleep,*" and Louise felt this night as if utterly God-forsaken.

If she could have beheld her unhappy cousin during those hours, she might have fancied that his good angel was at her ear, upbraiding her with the ruin into which he was madly plunging, in the forlorn hope of winning that which would tempt her to remain faithful to her plighted troth.

When Victor left Louise, he proceeded at once to his room, and collected all the money he possessed. It was not a large sum, but he hoped to make it increase as magically as did the coins in the purse of Fortunatus. On this evening, he had no engagement at the theatre, and he hurried at once to the

saloon, to try the new trick by which he so confidently expected to win back all he had lost.

At first, his most sanguine anticipations were realized. He won, he doubled, trebled, quadrupled his bets, and still the current of good fortune bore him onward. Elated by this sudden change, he went on wildly, staking any sum for which he could gain an equivalent, until it seemed the very frenzy of gambling.

A crowd collected around the table to observe the strange conduct of the winner, for at every new success, he uttered exclamations of wild excitement. Among the lookers-on, was a tall, acute-looking man, who was evidently not a Southerner. He had the organ of calculation largely developed on his head ; and as he looked on the game, he gradually comprehended that the success of the winner was based on a calculation of chances ; he also saw that he had stopped short of that point which must insure invariable success.

By a species of intuition, he saw the defective spot, and the evil genius of Victor whispered him to take advantage of it. The stranger was not an habitual gambler, though he knew many games accurately. At first, he bet cautiously, and to the surprise of the bystanders, the tide of fortune turned at once in his favor.

He increased the stake—again he won—again—again—and yet again. Becoming excited by success, he plunged at last into the game with his whole soul, and the wavering bewildered being opposed to him was no match for him either in skill or coolness.

Three o'clock rang out from the pendule on the mantel,

and Victor heard it as the knell of his last hope. His trick had failed, and he was bankrupt. In moody despair he rushed away, and sat down in an outer room, in the darkest corner, behind a window-curtain. There he remained in a species of stupor, listening vaguely to the sounds that issued from the apartment he had just left, and wondering if the waters of the Mississippi were very cold this dismal night. If he should throw himself in them he speculated on the chances of his body being found, and identified, and thus his sad fate becoming known to his family; or whether it would be swept into the Gulf, and become a prey to the sea monsters which infest the great deep.

As Victor thus sat, two gentlemen, unconscious of his vicinity, placed themselves near him, and resumed a conversation they seemed to have been carrying on. One said,

"The death of Madame Le Grand, will doubtless cause the marriage of her nephew to be postponed."

"Whom does he marry?"

"Miss Ruskin, report says: and I rather think it is correct in this instance."

"O, Nevin is only a grand nephew, and he will scarcely defer his nuptials on that account, especially where so uncertain a coquette as Louise Ruskin is the bride-elect. He had better take her while she is in the humor."

Victor's attention was arrested, and he listened with clenched hands and stifled breath. The other asked,

"Is it certain that he has serious intentions in that quarter? He may be only playing the young lady's own game against herself."

"O no, Nevin has a large bet depending on his union with her before the spring is half over. You will see that Madame Le Grand's death will make no change in his plans, although, as next heir, he comes in for the greater part of her handsome estate."

"The old lady had better have left her diamonds to the pretty bride-elect, than to have had them buried with herself," remarked one of the speakers, with a laugh.

"I am credibly informed that not less than thirty thousand dollars worth of diamonds of the finest water, are entombed on that old mummy. If I were Nevin, I would have her disinterred, and remove them. It is the most horrible mockery of death I ever heard of."

"Not he, indeed. Nevin has too great a horror of death and all its accompaniments, to touch jewels that have once lain in contact with the perishing remains of mortality. Besides, rich as he now is, of what consequence are the thousands that lie entombed with the old anatomy? These diamonds are family jewels brought from France by her husband, when they fled from the horrors of the Revolution there. Hence her desire to lie in state in them, even in her grave, I suppose."

They strolled away, and Victor remained plunged in reverie; but it was scarcely less terrible than that which had preceded it. The turbid waters of the river no longer rolled darkly before his mental vision; but in their place, arose a solitary grave-yard, with a newly made tomb within it, which skill and craft might enable him to penetrate without detection. The sparkling gems that were hidden away there, were

useless to the poor, perishing remnants of mortality that lay within; they were lost to those who had a legal claim on them; then where would be the crime of restoring them to the light of day? especially as, by so doing, he could reinstate himself in his former position, and snatch the woman he adored, from his rival.

Victor had recently endured such violent mental vicissitudes, that his mind was not in a condition to make very accurate distinctions between wrong and right. He argued the question mentally, always leaning to the side that promised to extricate him from his present wretched condition; the weak are always open to temptation, and the unhappy young man listened to its voice, until he had no accurate perception of right left. It seemed to him but a choice between suicide and the desecration of the tomb of the dead; and in his madness he half believed that Providence had thrown this temptation in his way, to save him from the greater guilt of self-destruction.

The plantation of the deceased woman was only a few miles below that of his father, and he had several times visited the place in company with Nevin, before the rivalry between them with Louise, grew up. A Catholic church was in the vicinity, with a rural cemetery surrounding it; and he knew well the square of ground in it belonging to the Le Grand family. Suspicion could never light on him, even if the desecration was discovered; and in after years when the cloud which now shaded the fortunes of his family had cleared away, he would anonymously return the money ob-

tained from the sale of the diamonds, with interest from the time they came into his possession.

Thus, in fact, he would only be taking a temporary loan from his enemy, with which to baffle his hopes, and win his chosen bride. What had been asserted of the approaching marriage of Louise with Nevin was only the common gossip of the town ; and after her late assurances of good faith to himself, he attached no importance to them.

At length Victor arose with a feeling of desperate resolve ; he took from his shirt bosom a valuable pin, which he had not parted from when he sold the remainder of his ornaments, and going into the next apartment, he spoke mysteriously with the proprietor of the rooms. The result was, that the man gave him a small sum of money, in exchange for it, and with this, Victor Harrington left New Orleans that morning on his terrible errand.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

SPRING had opened at Wavertree, and with it came ominous fears of an overflow in the sweeping current which came whirling down, day after day, a mass of driftwood and turbid water, whose volume increased from hour to hour with fearful rapidity.

The fall and early portion of the winter season had been unusually dry in that vast region watered by the Mississippi and its tributaries. Then set in heavy and long-continued rains, and among the mountainous regions in which the Missouri, Arkansas, and Red rivers have their origin, there was a simultaneous breaking-up of the accumulated masses of snow and ice.

As the steamers from above landed at a neighboring wood-yard, to obtain fresh supplies of fuel, those upon them gave the most disastrous accounts of the country through which they had passed. Many plantations were already overflowed, where no levees existed, or where they were too small to protect from the flood.

Wavertree was situated in a bend of the river, and the formation of a sand-bar on a point of land on the opposite side of the stream a few miles above, had within the few past years given Mr. Harrington much uneasiness. He feared



that the course of the current would thus be changed, and its whole force be thrown upon his plantation. That his fears were not groundless, was soon proved by several land-slides, which approached during the past season, to within twenty feet of the substantial levee covered with thickly matted grass, which had long protected the low coast from the inroads of the river.

The levee was apparently as solid as ever, but Mr. Harrington did not feel quite secure, and the embankment was strengthened in every possible manner that skill and ingenuity could devise. That these precautions were not useless was evident, as the advancing water gained upon it; and soon every soul on the plantation learned to look with apprehension on the approach of the steamers that almost hourly plowed their way up or down the eddying current; for the waters had now risen so high that the dashing of the paddle-wheels sent the waves over the levee, and often, in places, it seemed to quiver from the shock.

To strengthen these spots from within was now the only resource, and the other plantation labor was suspended to avert, to the planter, the most dreaded of all calamities, a crevasse. During this time of apprehension, Evelyn's skill as an engineer was of incalculable service to Mr. Harrington. The whole day, and frequently a portion of the night, was spent by both gentlemen in superintending the labor of the slaves. These also worked with good will when they beheld the gray hair of their kind master floating in the winds that swept over them, and saw the additional wrinkles which the cares of the past year had stamped upon his features. They also

labored for the preservation of their own cabins, their flourishing gardens, and their poultry-houses from destruction. To them too it was home, and all the local attachments the most of them had known, clung around this spot. Nearly the whole of the elder slaves had belonged to the place when it was purchased by Mr. Harrington, and all the younger and more valuable portion of them, had been reared under his kindly rule.

They were warmly attached to their master and his children, and each individual one was as proud of the grace and elegance of the two young ladies as if they had been allied to them by ties of blood. To a faithful slave, the children of the white family are as dear as their own; and to those children they unhesitatingly appeal in cases of difficulty, when they have passed into their possession; confident that the plea of being family negroes is an all-sufficient one to entitle them to forbearance. Nor is it often done in vain. "He served my father," covers a multitude of sins of omission and of commission.

While affairs proceeded thus actively without, a kind of dreamy quiet seemed to have settled over the inmates of the mansion. Occupied with her own sweet fancies, Adèle's soft low voice might be often heard murmuring such snatches of simple ballad music as were most filled with tender and delicate beauty. The new happiness which flooded her being thus found utterance; though she checked her glad song instantly, if she chanced to look up and catch sight of her sister. It seemed, to her sympathetic heart, cruel to suffer Pauline to have even a glimpse of the beautiful Eden that

had lately blossomed in her own heart, when her future lay before her a desert waste.

Pauline was still an invalid ; she did not appear to possess sufficient energy to arouse herself from the lifeless dejection in which her long illness had left her. She sat for hours alone, leaning back in a large chair with her hands folded on each other, white and lifeless-looking ; with eyes closed, to shut out the glad sunshine which seemed as a bitter mockery to her cheerless heart. She forgot how much she had once enjoyed its brilliancy—and almost peevishly wondered why God had made the earth so fair, when the being he had created in his own image was so imperfect, so false, as men often proved themselves.

The only pleasure she seemed to enjoy was lying at night where she could behold the star-lit sky. The hammock which swung in one corner of the piazza was her chosen place of rest, from the time the sun disappeared until a late hour of the night. From her position there a clear open space of the blue concave above was visible, with its bright orbs gleaming from the lucid depths of ether ; and often did she pine for the wings of the seraph to flee away to one of these, and leave to earth and its unsatisfactory destinies, all memory of the sorrow that oppressed her being.

Miss Gertrude had vainly endeavored to win her attention to such employments as had formerly interested her ; the sick heart recoiled from all that had once afforded pleasure, and Pauline believed that length of days was only granted her that she might more perfectly prepare for the great change awaiting all of mortal birth. With this impression,

she confined her reading almost exclusively to the Scriptures and their commentaries, and she endeavored to meditate on the divine Mediator, who came to redeem humanity from its burden of woe and sin. But alas! the thorn-crowned head of that majestic One, was often misplaced by the human one of him who had cruelly reduced her to her present state of hopeless dejection; and she daily more deeply despised herself for still regretting the loss of one who had shown himself so reckless of her happiness.

Nothing was heard of Malcolm. He seemed to have dropped as completely out of their world, as if death had removed him, and his name was tacitly avoided in the family. With the morbid restlessness that consumed her heart, Pauline pined to hear something—any thing, from him. Even the echo of his name, she fancied, might soothe her irritated spirits, and she wondered why they would *never* pronounce it before her.

Did they know where he was, and purposely refrain from telling her? Why should that be? the evil was perpetrated now, and surely they could not imagine that the sound of a name could injure her. Perhaps he already sought another—and the fierce pang this thought gave her poor heart, told its own tale of unrepressed anguish and deathless love. The rivalry between herself and her sister, seemed as a vague dream now, and she thought of Malcolm as one who had grown indifferent to the love he had won merely through caprice.

Alarmed by her slow convalescence, her father again consulted Dr. Germain. He gave it as his opinion, that change

of scene, and such gentle excitements as she could bear, would be the best restoratives. To this, Pauline would not listen; firmly impressed with the belief that the physician only sent her from her home to die far away from the beloved scenes which surrounded her, she positively refused to leave Wavertree, even for a day.

"I can do nothing more," said the doctor, gravely. "I have already tried every tonic in my pharmacopœia, and all have failed. There is but one chance left. She has strong affections: induce her to believe that some one she loves is suffering, is threatened with danger—that may arouse her sympathies, and thus act on the stagnant mind, for I need scarcely tell you that it is the mind which is preying on the physical system."

"Her restoration must then be purchased by some real disaster," replied her father, gloomily. "I can not consent to practice any deception upon her, for if detected, the reaction might be worse than her present condition."

"I am not sure that in this case the experiment would not be excusable. Your son is absent—can you not induce her to visit New Orleans, under the plea of seeing him during an illness?"

Mr. Harrington's face clouded, and he evasively replied,

"I do not think that my son is at present in the city; and Pauline believes he is traveling for his health. Thus, no deception can pass undetected in that quarter."

Such had been the belief impressed on Pauline's mind, for her father considered it dangerous to let her know the actual truth concerning Victor; this heavy burden was confined to

his own heart, and not one of the family was aware of the real position of the young man. Mr. Harrington watched for news from his truant son, from day to day, with a solicitude that frequently amounted to anguish; but for many weeks after his departure, nothing definite arrived.

At length a letter from Louise came, inclosed in one from her mother, in which they described the condition of Victor as that of incipient madness. Mr. Harrington would have left home at once in pursuit of him, had it been possible to do so; but the threatening appearance of the river, rendered it imminently necessary to ship the crop which had been prepared for market, and he could only write to such friends in the city as would take an interest in discovering the unhappy youth, and restoring him to his family.

During this season of dread, his mind was often in such a condition as almost to unfit him for any labor. There were hours in which his overwrought spirit seemed as if it must give way; that the unnatural tension which sustained him must suddenly snap and give him that everlasting rest which it often seemed to him an eternity of peace would be necessary to bestow on his strained mind.

In all this troubled time, his restless slumbers were filled with dreams, and night after night his angel wife seemed to hover near him, and beckon him to herself. But for the children she had left him, how gladly would he have laid aside the cares of mortality, and joined her "where sorrows cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." But to his heart, these were precious beyond expression, and he knew

that his own death, in the present condition of his affairs, would leave them nearly unprovided for.

In this time of trial, the energy, tact, and sympathy of his young guest, were invaluable to him. Evelyn assisted him in every manner, and endeavored to shield him, as far as possible, from the too great pressure of care. In their few intervals of quiet, he led the conversation to such topics as insensibly raised his mind to higher subjects of thought than the mere earthly interests that encompassed him. It seemed to the worn man, like breathing a purer and brighter atmosphere for a few moments, which strengthened him anew for the conflict.

One evening, toward the latter part of April, all the family were assembled on the front piazza, wistfully regarding the vast flood which rolled past, now within a few inches of the top of the levee. The river had been stationary for the last twenty-four hours, and hopes began to dawn that it would soon begin to subside.

The negroes were at work on a portion of the embankment, about a quarter of a mile above the house, which, within the last few days, had betrayed symptoms of giving way. They sang as they labored at their task, and the wild chorus was borne toward them by the evening breeze, in snatches of melody; for time and tune are seldom denied to the negro race, and in the open air their voices often have a fine effect.

Mr. Harrington sighed as he listened.

"Poor fellows!" he said, "how merrily they can sing, even with such a misfortune threatening them as the loss of home

must be, even to a slave. I wish I could take things thus lightly."

Before this remark, Pauline had been gazing in her usual listless manner upon the scene; but the words of her father seemed to strike a painful chord, and, for the first time for many long weeks, a faint shade of crimson swept over her cheek. She looked earnestly at him, and asked with interest,

"Do you apprehend any danger, father?"

"Look at yonder flood, my child; see how angrily it lashes the frail barrier of earth we can interpose to stay its might, and judge for yourself. I sometimes wonder that it has not long ago been swept away by the force of the current. To-night I shall have strict watch kept; for the greatest danger of a crevasse is when the flood begins to subside."

Pauline arose, and shading her eyes with her hand, looked out on the wide sweep of arrowy water, in which the angry clouds of a stormy sunset were mirrored.

"And there is really danger that our beautiful home will be wrecked by the flood?" she asked.

"There is, my daughter; I almost reproach myself with this brief interval of rest I allow my wearied frame, when I know that on the next few hours hangs our safety."

"And I have been so self-absorbed I have not heeded this danger," she sorrowfully said. "I knew that you were much away, and you often seemed harassed; but I was too selfish to heed it. Dearest father, forgive me, for I know that the state



of my mind must have added to all the other cares you have to bear."

She went up to him, laid her hand on his arm, and earnestly looked into his eyes, as she thus appealed to him. Mr. Harrington feelingly said,

"If I could see you arouse yourself from the deadly apathy that is destroying you, Pauline, the heaviest cause of suffering would be removed from my heart. Other cares I can bear, but this crushes me."

"Poor father—I will try, and you shall see how brave I will be," murmured Pauline, tenderly kissing him. "But tell me—in the event of a crevasse, will it not be dangerous to remain here? Should the levee break, where the negroes are at work, the whole force of the torrent will be thrown against the house, and we might all be swept away."

"I trust in God that it will not break. Evelyn and myself have consulted on this danger, and we have concluded that the risk is not sufficiently great to render a removal necessary."

Thus reassured, Pauline sank back on her seat, but her mind was thoroughly aroused to a keen interest in what was passing around her. A storm was evidently gathering, for the dark clouds toward sunset, were, every few seconds, rent by flashes of vivid lightning, and the muttering thunder approached gradually nearer and nearer, until it rolled in incessant peals above their heads.

An ominous stillness pervaded the atmosphere, soon, they well knew, to be wildly interrupted; and the two gentlemen gazed with deep solicitude on those evidences of Nature's ap-

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proaching strife. The servants were heard hurriedly closing the windows and doors against the coming storm, and the party on the levee sought a shelter from its anticipated violence; while those on the piazza retreated to the parlor opening on that side of the house, leaving the door unclosed, through which to behold the first burst of the tempest.

Presently a faint, low breath came quivering through the leaves, as if they had only now awakened to a sense of the brooding storm; then, almost before the eye saw their trembling, a wild wail swept around the house, and two beautiful crape myrtle-trees in full blossom, that stood in front of it, were snapped off within a few feet of the earth, and their crushed branches whirled aloft, the sport of the counter currents of air that appeared to meet on the spot. Branches from the other trees were torn away, and mingled with them, by the fierce blast that seemed to shake the very earth. The house began to reel, as though an earthquake were upheaving its foundations, and vainly did Mr. Harrington, aided by Evelyn, endeavor to close the door.

No common storm was this they now saw; for a tornado had evidently burst over the doomed place. Finding it impossible to shut the door, they hurriedly called on those around them to seek the hall, as the shorter beams across the ceiling rendered that the safest place of refuge.

"The lower story will be safer yet," suggested Miss Gertrude, as they hastened to the spot indicated.

"But should the levee break, we might not have time to save ourselves from the flood," replied Evelyn.

In the more imminent danger she had forgotten that, and she silently sat down in the hall with her trembling nieces beside her.

The whole party was scarcely safe within its shelter, when the floor of the room they had left was rent in twain in the centre, by the resistless force of the wind. At this crisis, the servants kept about the establishment, came rushing in with loud cries of terror, and wildly wringing their hands.

The efforts of the white family to soothe their fears, were fearfully interrupted by a sudden blast more furious than the first, and the roof was lifted from the house, and whirled into the yard, leaving the blinding torrent of rain to pour through the tottering walls. Afraid to descend to the lower story, there was no resource but to abide the issue as firmly as they might.

At this crisis, the cries of the negroes reached a wild pitch, and the others endeavored to stifle their own thrilling fears to reason with, and attempt to restore them to some degree of calmness. It was useless—like frightened animals, they seemed incapable of listening to words either of entreaty or command; when suddenly the clear musical voice of Evelyn was heard above the uproar, saying,

“Let us pray : God alone can help us in such extremity as this.”

There was a tone of authority in it which produced a perceptible lull in the tempest of human sounds around him; and after the first few sentences he uttered, each voice sunk into quietness as its owner followed the earnest supplications of him who invoked the mercy of that power which could

alone stay the raging storm that threatened their destruction. Dense darkness, only broken by the vivid lightning that hurtled through the inky clouds, had settled over them, adding to the horrors of the scene.

By this fitful and lurid light, Adèle looked on the pale face of her lover, turned devoutly toward heaven, and thought that inspiration was surely in the beautiful expression of almost divine calm it wore amid the uproar around him. That he "possessed his soul in peace," was evident to her, even at such a fearful crisis, and the certainty came to her then and there, that inexpressible love and respect for Philip Evelyn dwelt in her heart.

The excited negroes crouched down as near together as possible, and only a few faint sobs interrupted the young man's appeal for mercy. At length he arose, and looked out on the darkened sky and deluged earth.

For the last few moments there had been a lull in the storm, but he feared it was only gathering new force to pursue its devastations.

Mr. Harrington stood beside a window which the force of the blast had torn open; it looked toward the river, and Evelyn approached him and awaited the next flash of light, as he gazed fearfully toward that portion of the levee which had lately shown signs of giving way.

A deep pall of darkness had gathered over the earth, and he stood in inexpressible solicitude for the space of a minute, before the gloom was rent by a flash of electric fire that quivered in lines of ghastly brightness over the dense clouds; they afforded a brief glimpse of the angry torrent, lashed into

foam by the fury of the winds, and the levee seemed rising and falling with the motion of the current.

During the awful interval of darkness that followed this brief illumination, Mr. Harrington leaned against the wall, and pressed his hand upon his wildly throbbing heart, to endeavor to stifle the suffocating sensation which oppressed him. He waited in breathless suspense for another glimpse of what was passing without.

It came—and with it, a sound as if the very foundations of the great deep were broken up. A wild torrent poured against the rocking walls of the house, and each one in it gave up all for lost.

“A crevasse! a crevasse!” shouted the negroes, lashed anew into the wildest fear. “My God—my God have mercy upon us,” and mingled cries and prayers arose on the darkness.

“The worst has happened,” said a voice so broken and feeble that it startled even the speaker. “My children, draw near to me; let us perish together, if die we must. Come, Evelyn—come, my sister.”

In the dense gloom, they drew nearer, over the trembling floor, and as they surrounded him, the stricken father sunk down in another of those terrible attacks of insensibility which had already so greatly alarmed them.

“My father is dying,” exclaimed Pauline, roused at once to assume the ascendancy which had been hers before her illness. “Sustain his head, Aunt Gertrude, and you, Adèle, warm his hands in yours, while I seek some means of restoring him.”

"You are not able, sister; let me go," said the trembling Adèle, but Pauline firmly said,

"Remain where you are, dear Adèle. I know where I can find a restorative that you would have to search for. At all events it is worth the risk of seeking."

There was a decision in her tones which admitted of no appeal; and placing her hand against the wall, as a guide in the darkness that closed around them in the intervals between the flashes of lightning, she glided over the unsteady floor, until she gained the farthest end of the hall, where a door opened into a back parlor, from which there was a communication with her own room.

When she reached the threshold, she was compelled to pause and wait for the next glare to illuminate the ruin, that she might ascertain if the floor offered a secure footing. It came, and was gone so quickly that nothing was distinctly revealed; but the floor showed no visible rent, and she resolved to trust herself to its stability. She could but lose life in the attempt to serve her father, and it was now a possession she valued chiefly on his account.

With light and cautious tread, she moved over the quivering floor, and safely reached the opposite side; an open door stood before her, and a few more steps brought her to the entrance of her own chamber. By this time the fury of the storm had sunk into a low sobbing sound, as if Nature mourned over the devastations she had committed, and the air was filled with momentary gleams of electricity, which cast a wan and weird light on the ruin that met her view.

The wind seemed to have spent its fury on that side of the

house, for the wall was torn partially away, and the beautiful furniture lay crushed among fragments of wood and plaster. Pauline saw that her quest was hopeless, and she turned back discouraged and heart-sick. To reach the rest of the household was now her first wish, and without pause, she carefully retraced her steps, and soon stood in safety in the hall.

It occurred to Pauline that the opposite side of the mansion had not, in all probability, suffered so much. In that, was the library, and she nervously opened a door leading into it. To her great joy, she saw that a portion of the roof still sheltered more than half its extent—she stepped in, and found that the floor seemed firm beneath her tread. At the upper end, there was another door which opened close behind the spot on which her father lay, and with the joyful hope that they might all be saved, she sped lightly toward it. Speaking rapidly as she unclosed it, Pauline said,

“There is safety here, Cousin Philip. A few steps, and my father can be placed under shelter.”

Evelyn arose from his kneeling position beside Mr. Harrington, and quickly joined her. He remembered that a small closet was in the wall in an angle made by the fireplace, in which a reading-lamp and matches were always kept. With that quick intuition of what is best to be done, which is invaluable in time of danger, he sought the sheltered nook, and after groping about a few moments, found the box of matches, and succeeded in lighting the lamp.

The faint rays it sent through the open door into the hall, gave courage to the servants to obey the commands of their young mistress. At first, they moved slowly and crouch-

ingly forward, afraid that the tottering floor would fail beneath them. Two of the strongest men raised Mr. Harrington, and with his head still supported in the arms of his sister, they cautiously bore him within the library, and placed him on a lounge at the further end. The others followed, and a melancholy group gathered around the insensible man.

Evelyn knew that bleeding copiously afforded the only chance of recovery for him, and he endeavored to use his pen-knife as a lancet. The stagnant blood refused to flow, and the heavy breathing that filled the room with its ominous sounds, caused those who heard it to shiver with dread.

While these efforts to restore sensibility were made, the storm had exhausted its violence; and the gray clouds were sailing overhead in vapory masses, affording occasional glimpses of the full moon and the quiet stars. Gradually these were swept away, and the blue dome of heaven, in its silent majesty, looked down on the scene of ruin and suffering left by the wild career of the tempest.

Now that the wind had ceased its uproar, and the dashing of the rain was hushed, sounds of human suffering came to those who were powerless to assist those who uttered them. Cries for help came from the quarter occupied by the negroes; and the various mournful and terrible sounds uttered by cattle when in danger, made a discordant wail of distress, which his children almost rejoiced that Mr. Harrington could not hear.

Evelyn left the side of his old friend and went to a window which afforded a view of the plantation. The whole surface of the earth was covered with the flood, and every tree and



shrub that might have risen above its level seemed to have been torn away by the tornado. A wild waste of turbid water now occupied the place of the cane-fields, so lately flourishing with verdant beauty ; and this was dotted by dark objects he knew to be the cabins of the negroes. In the bright moonlight he could see figures on their roofs, and he fervently prayed that none might perish in this awful season of calamity.

To wait until morning brought assistance was the only resource, for he knew that the water below must have reached at least the height of seven feet, and no communication could take place except by boats.

Long and dreary was the watch of that terrible night. Toward midnight the exhausted lamp expired, and only the moon and stars gave light through the broken roof ; and the sullen wash of the waves against the uncertain walls, seemed the sad wail of desolation over the destruction of beautiful, beloved Wavertree.

Even the patriarchal tree which had given a name to the place, and had defied the storms of ages, reared its bare and denuded trunk toward heaven. The branches had been scattered by the resistless tornado as so many dead autumn leaves. Toward morning Evelyn opened the window-shutter on that side of the house which the tree had apparently protected from destruction, and inexpressibly sad were the feelings of the weeping group that surrounded the apparently dying man, as they beheld the ruin of the dear old tree ; it seemed to them a fatal prestige of the calamities which were crushing the fortunes and life of him who had been so long sheltered beneath its branches.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

A BRILLIANT morning sun dawned on a scene of desolation, of which words would fail to give an accurate picture. A wide gap in the levee afforded free ingress to the sullen flood, and the ruins of the old mansion vibrated to every wash of the waves. Fortunately the wing containing the library was of more modern construction than the body of the house, and offered greater resistance to the insidious undermining of the waters.

As far as the eye could reach, the sunbeams were reflected back from the invading flood, and an experienced eye saw, at a glance, that ruin and devastation reigned conquerors over the lately flourishing plantation; and not over Wavertree alone, but many other places must have shared the same fate; as this levee protected many miles of the coast, and the uniform level of the lands offered no obstruction to the passage of the water.

Many of the shivering and half-drowned cattle had found their way to the embankment, where it still remained firm; and stood forlornly regarding the deluge which surrounded them, while the remainder had perished in their struggle to regain a temporary place of safety.

The roofs of the negro cabins were covered with their in-

mates, who ever and anon raised their voices in a vain effort to hold communication with those in the house. At length two of the most intelligent men succeeded in making a frail raft of the planks from the roof of a cabin, and on it they slowly and cautiously approached the wrecked mansion. Their own humble abodes had escaped almost scatheless, as they fortunately lay just beyond the path of the tornado; being situated more than half a mile from the house.

As the men drew near, they called aloud to the master, who, alas! was in no condition to hear them; and Miss Gertrude went to the window.

"Ah, ha, Miss Gertrude, dat you, safe dar? I'm mighty glad, de Good Man knows, to see you agin. An' whar's master, an' de young ladies? I hope nothin's happened to dem, dis obstroplous night," said Peter, the spokesman of the two, with perceptible anxiety in his voice.

"Your master is ill, Peter—too ill to speak to you now. The rest of us have escaped almost by a miracle. How is it with you all at the quarter? Has any fatal accident occurred among you, during this dreadful storm?"

"Bress de Lord, we's all safe, missis. Even de picaninies is doin' bery well. But, 'bout master. Is he bery sick?"

"I am 'fraid he is, Peter. Can you not find a boat? What has become of ours?"

"It's gone like de old house," replied the negro. "I nebber 'spected to live to see de bressed Wavertree all gone to smash dis here way; an' I think it oncommon strange God a' mighty could n't let well enough alone."

"Hush, Peter. Do not speak irreverently of what *He* sees best to do," replied Miss Harrington, gravely. "My brother stands in need of medical assistance as speedily as it can be obtained. I must trust to you to get a message to Dr. Germain as soon as possible."

"De Lord above knows my willin'ness to do de bes' I can, Missis; but it's rather dubous about gittin' a boat, and de bes' plan will be to git on de top o' de levee an' walk down to de doctor's. It's a narrow paff, an' hemmed in wid de swell-in' flood, but it's like de road to glory in dat respec': derefore ole Pete is willin' to trabel it for de service of his yearthly master, as he is de oder for his heavenly one."

During this conversation, the remainder of the wearied and frightened group gathered around the window, and glad greetings passed between the negroes. Evelyn spoke to Peter.

"Make every effort, my good fellow, to get Dr. Germain here as speedily as may be; you will probably find a boat moored safely to the levee somewhere above, where it has not broken away. Any of our neighbors will let you have the use of it, when you state the condition in which your master lies."

"I un'stan's, Mass' Philip, an' I will 'bey your 'structions to de letter. Ah—de lily is whiter den eber, an' de rose hab los' its damask," he added, with a low bow, to the two sisters, who left their father's side a moment to look out on the changed aspect of their beloved home.

The negroes departed on their errand, and as the family drew around the couch on which Mr. Harrington lay apparently in a heavy sleep, a hurried counsel was held as to the

best course to be pursued in their forlorn condition. To remain in the ruin was impossible, for it was by no means safe, even if they had possessed the means of comfort within its walls. Evelyn proposed that the first steamer that passed down the river should be hailed, and Mr. Harrington, with his sister and daughters, should be transferred to it, and leave for New Orleans, where such attendance as the sick man stood so imminently in need of, could be procured. He would himself remain with the overseer to look after the safety of the negroes, and would follow them to the city when comfortable arrangements had been made for them.

This plan had suggested itself to each one, but Miss Gertrude and her nieces felt a great reluctance to become the guests of Mrs. Ruskin, at such a crisis ; yet they knew if they ventured to stop at a hotel a mortal offense would be given to that exacting personage. A moment's reflection, however, convinced them that the first consideration must be the benefit of Mr. Harrington, and every objection yielded before the necessity of placing him where the best medical skill could be obtained.

This determined on, it became necessary to reach the opposite side of the house, if there remained any possibility of doing so, to ascertain if any portion of the wardrobe of the family could be gathered from the wreck. Pauline overruled her aunt and Adèle, and insisted that as she had once crossed the insecure floor she would best know how to find her way in safety : but Evelyn would accompany her to protect her as far as possible from accident.

On reaching the hall, they found that the floor had sunk a

foot below its former level ; Evelyn stepped upon it first, and finding that it only oscillated slightly, he offered his hand to Pauline and carefully assisted her down. As they stood on the threshold of the back parlor, they saw that it gradually slanted toward the opposite side where the supporting wall had partially fallen. The doors were all open, and through the space where once had stood her own beloved room, the blue heavens were visible to Pauline.

Evelyn endeavored to induce her to turn back, as he believed the risk incurred would not be repaid by what she might regain there ; but she insisted that she could pass the intervening space in safety ; as she spoke, she eluded his grasp and glided across the floor, looking more like a spirit than a living being.

Afraid to step upon the floor at the same time lest their united weight might be more than it would bear, Philip stood still until she had gained the threshold of her own apartment. Then he rapidly followed her, and they both stood together in what had so lately been a graceful temple, dedicated to refinement and elegance.

Now the furniture was crushed and defaced, and the greater part of it utterly destroyed. Pauline eagerly sought for the remains of the writing-table, but only a few vestiges of it remained ; and with an expression of blank disappointment she turned to the dressing-stand, which lay on one side with the mirror shivered into fragments. On unclosing the drawers, the contents were found in a tolerable state of preservation from the damp, and she took from them a change of clothing for herself and sister.

Ashamed of the hesitation they had betrayed in braving a danger from which their young lady had not shrunk, two of the servants at length found courage to follow Pauline, and after gaining that side of the house in safety, they soon penetrated to the respective chambers of their master and his sister. In the latter, they found a large work-basket, which Letty, her own maid, filled with the clothes selected by Pauline, and safely transferred them to the library. An empty trunk was also sent over to pack them in, and Pauline prepared to return.

As she was about to leave the spot forever, she paused and cast her eyes around the beloved walls, as if bidding a last adieu to the place which had been so dear to her heart: where so many bright hours had been spent—where the great anguish of her life had overtaken her.

As her sorrowful glance roved slowly around, it caught sight of several bits of paper scattered under the crushed bedstead. She darted forward, and there, saturated with water, lay her portfolio, nearly concealed by the fallen drapery of the bed.

"Thank God! I could lose all better than this!" was the exclamation with which she drew it forth, and eagerly opening it, a faint rush of crimson came to her pallid cheeks as she grasped a slender frame that lay within. Forgetful of Evelyn's vicinity, she hurriedly unclosed it: the light glanced on a face of regal manly beauty, and her companion knew then why she had so resolutely braved the risk of entering her own room again. He looked on her face, and read there a joy scarcely inferior to that which would have welcomed

the living original, had he come, as once she thought *he* would, to claim her everlasting troth. Then her lips grew tremulous and white, and with blinding tears she hid it from her sight. Philip softly said,

"Give it to me, cousin. The sight of that face, which seems an index of so much that is noble, only lacerates your heart anew. Put it far from you, and it will be better for you."

"Do not ask it of me, Philip. I can not—I can not. He does not know I have it: he left it here by accident. It was brought to me by the servant who attended to his room. I did not then think it wrong to keep it, for I believed he loved me. Now I *must* keep it, or—or—"

She paused and struggled with her emotion. Then with an accent of pride, she said,

"It is my *will* to keep it—let that suffice."

Evelyn saw that it would be useless to remonstrate, and he said nothing more. Pauline gave him a small casket containing her own and her sister's jewels, which she had found safe in one of the drawers; and herself carried her portfolio with its precious contents, on their return to the library.

When they entered, they found those within watching the approach of a steamer which cautiously drew near the eddying whirl made in the river by the crevasse. She made a landing nearly opposite the house, and a boat with the captain in it, who was an old acquaintance, came to offer such assistance as it was evident they so greatly needed. Sincere was the concern of the kind man, when he learned the condition of the master of the family, and he hurried back to provide the means of transporting him to his vessel.



After much difficulty, Mr. Harrington was transferred to the steamer, the motion caused the blood to flow from his arm, which had been left unbandaged in the hope of such a result, and he showed some faint signs of returning consciousness. He was soon placed in a comfortable berth, and a few moments afterward, Adèle was made inexpressibly happy by an effort from him to pronounce her name. Judicious and unremitting attention soon restored him to perfect consciousness, though he was still feeble to an alarming degree.

Evelyn bade the melancholy family a reluctant farewell, assuring them that so soon as he had seen the slaves safely transferred to the high land on the opposite side of the river, and as comfortably situated as the nature of things admitted, he would join them in New Orleans.

As the boat swung around, and prepared to resume her voyage down the stream, a wild wail of sorrow from the negroes, over the departure of their beloved master arose, and its sad cadence mingled with the dash of the waters, and the roar of the escaping stream, until an intervening bend in the river shut out the mournful wreck of that which at last evening's sunset had been so fair, and also drowned the sorrowful cries of the unhappy blacks over the misfortunes which hadwhelmed all in one common ruin.

They comprehended the probable result of the disasters of the past night, and a vague fear filled the minds of all, that a sale must soon take place, which would transfer them to the ownership of another, in all probability less kind, less considerate than him who had so long held them beneath his mild sway.

By almost superhuman exertions, the overseer, aided efficiently by Evelyn, found means to transfer them during the day to the opposite side of the river, which was hilly and uncultivated. There, temporary shelters were erected in a few hours, food was obtained for them, and, with their animal wants supplied, the negroes slept as soundly that night as though no trouble had ever visited their waking hours ; while he who held the position of their master, tossed from side to side on his uneasy pillow, bringing the bitter conviction nearer and nearer to his mind, that irretrievable ruin had overtaken him and his.

Once his strong soul would have braced itself for the conflict with that blind fortune which of late had so utterly withdrawn her favors from him ; but now he was ill, nerveless, with a confused brain and tremulous form, and he felt himself unable to cope with her.

In the long hours of that lonely night, with the sound of the dashing waves in his ears, he felt that the waters of a wider sea would soon receive him, and he laid bare his soul before the all-seeing One, and prayed to have all earthly frailties removed far from him.

But two things appertaining to earth he asked in humbleness of spirit : one was time to place his worldly affairs in such a train that none should suffer through him or have cause to reproach his memory ; the other was resignation to the decree which removed him from his beloved ones when they most needed him.

How often, during the hours of that long night, did the cry of David over his ungrateful son come home to him, as

his sorrowful breast yearned over the uncertain fate of the hapless Victor. To see him once more—to clasp him in forgiveness to his breast was now the strongest wish of his soul.

Fortunately the recent career of the reckless young man was unsuspected by him; for, even in thought, this noble, high-minded man could not link dishonor with the unsullied name he had borne through a long life. That Victor was wild and disobedient he keenly felt, but that deeper turpitude could ever sully his actions, he did not once suspect. Fortunately it was for him that he possessed such confidence, for it saved his broken heart from the severest pang it could have known, even amid the ruined hopes that were crushing him into his grave.

## CHAPTER XXV.

WEEKS sped away during the progress of these events, and the preparations for the union of Louise with Nevin were rapidly progressing. Since her last interview with Victor, she had heard nothing from him; he had ceased to persecute her with his letters, and in a vague state of fear concerning him, she awaited the arrival of her bridal day.

Where Victor was, or what he might be tempted to do, when her treachery became apparent to him, she trembled to think; yet, with her characteristic heedlessness, she thrust the fear from her as far as possible, and pursued the path she had resolved to tread in, with a calm brow and smiling lip.

Early one evening Nevin came in, with a serious-looking brow, crushing a letter in his hand. Louise looked up at him apprehensively, for, of late, every thing made her feel nervous.

"Has any thing unpleasant happened?" she inquired, in considerable trepidation.

"Do not grow pale, my pretty rose-bud," he playfully replied, though his thoughtful brow did not relax. "It is nothing that can affect your happiness; but a singular and re-

volting circumstance, in which I am interested, has just come to light. This letter from the overseer of the plantation of my lately deceased aunt, informs me of it; and, reckless as I am, it fills me with horror."

"What can it be?"

"You have, perhaps, heard me speak of a strange whim of the old lady, to be buried in family jewels of immense value? As she had no child to heir them, and they came to her from her husband's side of the family, to which I am not related, I considered my claim to them as doubtful. At all events, I should have respected her wish to lie in state, decked with jewels in her coffin. Well, by some means, it became known that diamonds were entombed with her, and Wilkins writes to me that the vault has been violated, and the jewels removed."

Louise uttered an exclamation of horror. She asked,

"Why did they not keep a careful watch over the tomb?"

"That was done until it was supposed all danger was past; but the very first night that my poor old aunt and her finery were left to the protection of the ghosts that are said to haunt church-yards, some daring disbeliever in such stories invaded her rest, and despoiled her of her ornaments."

"Do not speak so lightly of what was so terrible. It was an awful sacrilege. What steps will you take to recover them?"

"Before writing to me, Wilkins telegraphed to the chief of police in New Orleans to warn every jeweler in the city against purchasing them; and such precautions have been

taken as must lead to the detection of the robber, if he ventures to offer them for sale here."

"Are the diamonds of very fine water?"

"They are magnificent. M. Le Grand claimed royal blood—how justly I do not know; but these diamonds he asserted had once belonged to a Bourbon prince. He was one of the refugees from France during the Revolution of '92, and these jewels were nearly all he saved in his flight. He subsequently married my mother's aunt, who owned large possessions herself. Among the ornaments is one in the form of a scepter, surmounted by the most magnificent emerald I ever have seen."

"What a shame to bury them with the dead!" exclaimed Louise.

"True—and now they have been disinterred, I will make a better use of them, should I be so fortunate as to regain them. What a magnificent *parure* they would make for you, Louise, reset in modern style. That is, if you could get over the idea that they had once been buried with the dead."

Louise shuddered, and felt a little shrinking at first; but the imagined glitter of the gems soon dispelled this from her vain heart, and she eagerly replied,

"Regain them, if you can, by all means. Then it will be time enough to decide on the disposition we will make of them."

"I shall certainly make every effort to do so, *ma petite*. It would be too great a loss to suffer family jewels of such value to pass into the hands of others, without using every exertion to recover them."

"And is there not the slightest clew to the robber?"

"Not yet, though I hope we will soon gain one."

"If he should be discovered, would you prosecute him?"

"Undoubtedly—for the double crime of theft and sacrilege. Poor wretch! I am afraid it would go hard with him."

Louise looked grave. She knew it was criminal to act thus, but she was too young, and yet possessed too much feeling to wish to regain the gems at the sacrifice of another's liberty for years of his life; she reflected a few moments, and then said,

"It seems to me that some man maddened by poverty must have been tempted to commit this crime. Perhaps you may wrong him more deeply by seeking to expose him, than he could injure you by taking from you what you had virtually relinquished, by permitting the jewels to be buried in the grave."

"You reason like a little lawyer, my pretty one; but even if I were convinced, it is too late to withdraw the instructions the police have received; and I must admit that I hope they will be successful in detecting the author of so revolting a sacrilege."

Louise half smiled, and changed the conversation. A bridal tour to Havana had been proposed, and they were deeply interested in its discussion, when a servant belonging to Nevin sent in a request to see his master a few moments.

He arose and went to the door, where an intelligent mulatto, much in his confidence, awaited him.

"What is it, Ned?" he inquired. "Something unusual must have happened, to induce you to follow me."

"Excuse me, sir; but I knew how anxious you are about the robbery of Madame Le Grand's jewels, and as this letter was left for you shortly after you came away, by a suspicious-looking person, I thought I had better bring it to you at once."

"You were quite right. I will examine it immediately."

As Nevin returned to the room, he broke the seal of a strangely-folded letter, and pausing beside the lamp, he read the following words, written evidently in a disguised hand :

"NEVIN"

"It is useless to take any steps for the recovery of your diamonds, for I, the purloiner, assure you that they will be utterly unsuccessful. I have only borrowed them, for I am no vulgar thief, and I pledge my word that within ten years they shall be restored to you; or their equivalent in money, with the interest due on their value during that period.

"I stood in vital need of the funds I can raise on them, and I knew they could be of no value to you lying in a death-vault. I reasoned that it could be no injury to you to appropriate them for a season, and it could be no wrong to the wearer to remove them carefully from her person. This I have done. Think how strong my necessity must have been, when it overcame the thrilling horror of sacrilege to the grave of the dead, and be assured, that he who did this, is quite capable of warding off even suspicion from himself."

He read these lines, and then offered them to Louise. He laughed as he said,



"Here is something curiously apropos to the subject of our conversation; see, I have a letter actually from the robber, and he addresses me as unceremoniously as if he belonged to the same sphere in life with myself."

Louise eagerly held out her hand. She glanced at the crabbed-looking writing, and suddenly averting her head, grew very pale, and sank back on a seat.

"What is the matter, Louise? Why are you so pale?" asked Nevin, in alarm.

By a great effort she regained outward composure, though her heart beat so violently that she felt as if suffocating. She forced a faint laugh, as she said,

"I—I really hardly know. I am not given to fainting, as you know: but just then I felt very like it. It must be that there is some occult sympathy between the miserable writer of this letter and myself. You know I was pleading his cause only a little while since."

Her manner was flurried, and Nevin regarded her with a perplexed air. He seriously said,

"Your agitation is incomprehensible, Louise. The writer of this letter can not be known to you. Is the writing familiar to you? Look—tell me—does it resemble any you have ever before seen?"

Louise felt the necessity of self-control, and she resolutely curbed the tremor that thrilled through every nerve in her frame. She calmly replied,

"It does not—I am surprised that you should ask such a question. How could you expect me to recognize such crabbed-looking characters as those? Let me see what he says: I

was only moved by a foolish sympathy for one reduced to such extremity, that was all."

"Ah—I did not know your sympathies were so easily aroused before."

Louise affected not to hear him, as she glanced over the lines. She asked,

"Will you still prosecute the search?"

"Certainly; that was only written to prevent me from using vigorous measures for their recovery. I shall be doubly on the alert now. But let us dismiss this poor devil from our thoughts, and talk of our own affairs. They are of much deeper interest to us. A fine steamship leaves for Havana on this day week. Name the morning of that day for our bridal, and we will leave on her. It will soon be too late in the season for such a trip, if you continue to put me off, Louise. Shall it be so, my own love?"

After some demur, Louise consented to this arrangement, and after a little more lover-like talk, the betrothed parted.

The young girl had managed, as if in a fit of absence of mind, to retain the mysterious letter which had caused such inexplicable agitation to her. In the delight of having a day for their union at last named, Nevin had quite forgotten it.

Louise stood on the spot on which he had left her, listening eagerly until she heard the outer door close after him. Then she unfolded the paper with feverish haste, and with distended eyes and pallid lips she again examined the writing which no effort had been able to disguise from her.

As the conviction came home to her that Victor was indeed the writer, she threw herself upon a sofa, and wept bitterly.

"O, has it come to this," she convulsively sobbed. "A felon! and for my sake! and I so fallen—so ready to sell myself to another! O Victor, Victor, I love you in spite of all; but this act severs us more widely than even my union with another. This fatal letter, to what might it not have led, had I not secured it? Imprudent—imprudent to write it at all. I must destroy it at once."

With this thought she started up, and thrusting it into the lamp, watched it consume with trembling eagerness. She heard her mother approaching the room, giving directions to a servant as she came, and Louise sprang forward to escape before she had an opportunity to observe that she had been weeping.

Mrs. Ruskin arrested her on the threshold.

"Your uncle and cousins have just sent word that they are at the landing, and will be here within an hour. This notice was sent beforehand that we may have a room prepared for my brother, who is ill, and comes to the city for medical advice."

Louise paused, but she made no reply, and Mrs. Ruskin went on,

"It is especially inconvenient to have a sick man here in the height of our preparations for your marriage, but he must not go to a hotel while I have a house to receive him in."

"Of course not; after all his kindness to us," Louise found voice to say.

"O, as to that, I am not particular," replied her mother, with a shrug. "If it were not for other people talking, I would not incommode myself just now to receive them."

Thank heaven, after your brilliant marriage is concluded our obligations to him will be at an end, and I can free myself from keeping up a show of cordiality I really do not feel."

Louise was too much accustomed to her mother's hard manner of acting, to feel surprised that she thus expressed herself. She did not remonstrate, though with her heart full of newly-awakened tenderness toward Victor she thought it cruel to speak thus of a relative so near and so kind as her uncle had always been to every member of her mother's family. She only asked,

"What rooms have you ordered to be made ready for them, ma'am?"

"O, the same as usual; the two front chambers up stairs. But really, Louise, it will be very inconvenient to me, and an ill-omen beside, to have a dying man in the house when a wedding is going on."

"Dying, mother? My uncle is not as ill as that, I hope."

"I don't know. The messenger said he had suffered another attack similar to the one he had when we were there; and lay insensible many hours. But the worst news of all is, that a crevasse had taken place, and a tornado has swept over Wavertree—together they have almost destroyed the place. I know your uncle must be ruined, and he is the trustee for the fortune belonging to my children. I shall insist on coming in as first creditor, and having their interest secured at once, and that is one reason why I submit to the trouble of receiving them just now."

This intelligence aroused the interest of Louise, and she listened eagerly.

"Poor uncle!" she sighed. "He has been most unfortunate of late. You need have no fears, mother, concerning the money—so honorable a man will never permit orphan children to suffer through him."

"I hope not," was the brief rejoinder of Mrs. Ruskin, and Louise escaped to her own room. She hurried to the mirror to see if her tell-tale face would betray her emotion to those that were expected, and her eye glanced on a letter addressed to herself in the writing of Victor Harrington. Had a serpent met her on her path, she could scarcely have been more appalled, and she stood white and cold, afraid to learn its contents.

She had never been able to discover who placed the missives upon her dressing-stand, but all the communications she had received from Victor since his incognito, had been thus mysteriously placed where she must find them. Her own maid declared that she knew nothing of the means by which they were brought into the house, and hitherto the fear that her mother would discover their reception prevented her from making a too rigid inquiry among the other servants.

Partly anticipating the contents, she presently summoned courage to break the seal, and read these lines:

"Louise, I claim your promise. Victory is mine. I have won independence, and I claim the troth pledged to me. I know your mother will never consent to our union, but if you love me, as you have often vowed you do, you will not hesitate to elope with me.

"I am on the eve of departure for a foreign land, and you

must be my companion. O, Louise, I am almost deliriously happy in the thought that I can now call you my own—can snatch you from the gilded misery to which your mother is so eager to consign you. We will seek Italy—the world-renowned land of poetry and song, and in its charming climate and delightful associations forget the misery of the past.

“See, Louise; though the world persists in saying that you are on the eve of marriage with Nevin, I do not utter a reproach or a doubt of your truth. I believe that you love me, even as I do you, and you will gladly fly from the hollow splendor he offers you to him who assures you that he is neither deluding you nor himself when he offers you a luxurious and happy home in the land of the olive and the vine. Come with me, love, and I promise you happiness; what more can a mortal ask of life? What brighter boon can Heaven itself bestow on poor humanity?

“I will call on you this evening. Again I am Victor Harrington. Again I lift up my head among my peers, and exultingly claim the woman I love in spite of that unrighteous authority which would refuse her to me.”

Again Louise wept; but she soon stifled her tears, and seizing a pen hurriedly wrote.

“Come to see your dying father, Victor, who will be beneath our roof by the time this reaches you; but seek me not. I refuse to share the independence you have so mysteriously gained, because *I know how it was obtained*. Be assured I write only the truth when I assert this; and O!

Victor, I tremble while I write it. You, the son of an honorable man, have—

“Victor, Victor, if I thought that your unhappy passion for myself had brought this ruin upon you, I should reproach myself with it to the last hour of my life. Recoil from the evil you have committed. Make such restitution as is compatible with your own safety; suffer this dark passage in your life to be buried in your own breast, and in that of her who would once have shared her life with you; but not now, Victor—you have done that which places an everlasting barrier between us.”

There was no signature to this scrawl, which her tears defaced in many places; she folded and sealed it, and then summoned the mulatto girl who waited on her, to her presence.

“Annette,” she gravely said, “you have constantly denied all knowledge of the means by which the letters I have lately received have been placed in my room. It matters not now; but this I require of you; that you take this note without an address, and cause it to be delivered to the person who sent them, before an hour has elapsed. If you fail to do so, my mother shall be informed. Go now; I shall be sure to know to-night whether the note has reached the person for whom it is intended.”

Annette looked frightened, for she knew the unbending severity of her mistress. She stammered,

“Only think, Miss Louise. I has waited on you sence you was a little girl, and now you gwine to tell missis ’bout dese

letters, and git me in trouble, when I don't know nothin' 'bout em—I 'clare I don't."

"That may, or may not be true, Annette," replied her young lady, with more dignity than her maid had ever before seen her assume; "but you are literally to obey my orders. Since you live among the other servants, you must have some clew to the person who ventures to bring these letters here. It is imperatively necessary that an answer to this last one shall be sent at once, that an end may be put to such impertinence. It is your business to see that it safely reaches the person for whom it is intended; remember that he receives it without delay, or my mother shall investigate the affair."

A bustle was heard below stairs, which announced the arrival of her uncle's family, and Louise left the room with an imposing step. Annette stood where she left her, muttering,

"'Vestigation, indeed! Missis shan't do no sich thing. Jes' as if Miss Louise don't know that Mass Victor sent them ere letters, and till now she was mighty glad to git 'em. An' as I'm livin', here 's nothin' but a white paper kiver with no name at all on it! Well, women is women all de worl' over; dey mus' make a mystery out o' nothin'."



## CHAPTER XXVI.

MR. HARRINGTON was carried at once to the apartment prepared for him, and even Mrs. Ruskin was shocked as she looked on his fallen and pallid features. He seemed ten years older than when she had parted from him only a few months before, and his hair lay in silvery waves around his sunken temples.

He lay for many moments almost insensible from exhaustion, after they placed him on the bed, and when he lifted his weary eyelids, the first object he beheld was Louise, half weeping over his condition. He feebly motioned her to draw nearer to him, and as she bent over him, he whispered,

"My son, my Victor! Where is he, Louise? Do you know aught of him?"

"I do, dear uncle. I know that Victor is in town; that he has laid aside the incognito he has so long thought proper to observe toward his friends. I am certain he will be here to-night, for I have apprised him of your expected arrival."

"Thanks, my child. Are you *sure* he will come?" he eagerly asked.

"I think I can reply, Yes; for I look for him with certainty before the evening is over."

The overburdened heart of the father heaved a deep sigh

of thankfulness, and his lips moved as if he prayed mentally. Just then the physician who had been summoned, came in. He was an old acquaintance, and he examined the condition of his patient with a serious carefulness which caused those most deeply interested in the result, to tremble.

Mr. Harrington also drew his own auguries from his manner, and he said, in a subdued tone,

"I read my doom, doctor. Do not fear to speak the truth: I may shrink from leaving those who are dependent on me, but I do not fear to die. Nay, to meet the deliverer upon his holy mission, would be easy to me, but for the grief of those I love."

"I rejoice that it is thus with you," replied the physician, in the same tone; "for your time of deliverance from earthly cares is at hand. Set your house in order without delay, Mr. Harrington, for the subtle cord may be snapped at any moment."

"Ah! is it even thus?" and a bright ray of joy illumined his features for a single instant. The face of a seraph seemed bending toward him, to bear him away to that world where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

The weary! How significant was that little phrase. The burden of life might be laid down—and *rest* be found—rest for which he pined; which he so greatly needed. O no! death had no terrors for the good man who could raise his brow before the Eternal and with truth say, "Father, I have respected the divinity breathed into my spirit by thy everlasting grace. A true and noble life hast thou given unto me, and I have endeavored, so far as lay within the imperfect

ability of human nature, to do that which thou hast commanded thy children to perform."

While thus rapt away from earth, and its cares, the dying man was oblivious of those around him. The touch of Adèle, and the sound of her low voice speaking to the physician, recalled him; and he felt the true pang of death, as he thought of the helpless condition of those he must leave to struggle with the burden he was so glad to be released from.

The replies of Dr. Wells to the questions addressed to him were feeling, though true. He was a conscientious man, and he did not attempt to conceal the real condition of the patient from his family. He gently but distinctly informed Miss Harrington that no hope of recovery remained to her brother; that his heart was so seriously affected that any sudden agitation might cause his death, without a moment's warning.

They heard the fiat, and stifled their tears that they might not darken the last hours of existence which remained to him they so dearly loved. When the physician retired, Mr. Harrington desired to be left alone with his own family. As Louise kissed him before leaving the room with her mother, he whispered,

"Send Victor up to me the moment he arrives, my love."

Then he motioned his children to draw near to him and gave a hand to each one, while his sister stood beside his pillow, and laid her soft clasp upon his brow. He said,

"Gertrude, I leave my beloved ones to your care, and I fear the charge I bequeath with them will be a heavy one."

"Dear brother, do not think of that now. I stand in the

place of a mother to them, and, as such, I will endeavor to shield them from all you would deprecate for them."

"Thank you, sister. You will meet your reward in that land where earthly ties are again reunited. The doctor said that I must set my house in order, and my failing breath warns me that I have no time to lose. Gertrude, your predictions have proved fatally true. The speculations I was unfortunately tempted into, failed; and a series of unlooked-for disasters have since followed, to be consummated by the destruction of Wavertree. I know that I am ruined, and God takes me from the evil to come; but ah! he leaves those that I best love exposed to the bitter blast of impending poverty."

"Not poverty, brother," gently said Miss Harrington. "Something can be saved from the wreck, and that our own exertions can increase to a competence."

An expression of bitter pain passed over his features, and he feebly prayed.

"O God of infinite mercy, preserve me from false pride in this solemn hour. It is no degradation to labor for independence; then why do I shrink from it in your case? But I had so earnestly hoped to shield my darlings from the evils of life. I am punished sorely for the grasping spirit which made me ask for more for the sake of those I so much love."

"It was but natural, brother. Calm yourself, I entreat, and have no care for us. Give me as clear an account as possible of the condition of your affairs; and give me your directions, that I may endeavor to obey them as literally as possible."

After a pause, in which he seemed collecting his thoughts, he again spoke.

"But for the late calamity, you could have remained at Wavertree until the estate is settled. It would have taken several years to do that, and eventually enough would have been left to enable you to live according to your tastes. But now, there is only one course to be pursued. Surrender the estate at once to my creditors, by compromise. There will be enough to pay every debt I owe, and leave a small surplus, but it will take time. To get the property into their own hands, those I owe will readily give you the small farm four miles back on False river, and also a sufficient number of the negroes to cultivate it. Thus a home will be secured to you, and no man can say that in dying I defrauded him of a cent that was his due.

"And the people, sister—tell them that I remembered them; and my chief creditor, Mr. Hall, is too humane a man to see them pass into the possession of those who will not kindly treat them. See to this, Gertrude, or I can not die contented."

"We will care for that first, dear father," murmured Pauline. "Have no uneasiness on your mind concerning us, for we will still have our Father in heaven to care for us."

"And He is mighty to raise up as well as to cast down," said Mr. Harrington, devoutly. "I commit you to Him, darlings of my heart, for I know that his ways are right and just, however mysterious they may seem to our darkened vision."

There was a silence some moments, and then he again spoke in touching accents of appeal.

"O Victor, my son, my son, in this solemn hour, why are you not beside me? I can not die without once more beholding you. My soul will cling to this worn-out frame, I feel, until my eyes may rest upon you again."

As if in reply to this yearning wish, the door softly unclosed, and what seemed but the shadow of Victor glided toward the bed. More worn and emaciated than when we last beheld him, a deep fiery glare burned in his dark eyes, and his thin lips seemed drawn in a ghastly manner apart from his shining teeth.

That some terrible and all-absorbing emotion was gnawing, vulture-like, at his very being, was painfully apparent. Much as his father had desired to behold him, he shuddered and closed his eyes as this startling vision stood beside him and touched his hand with his own clammy one.

In a deep, monotonous tone, he said,

"You wished for me, and I am here. Father, will you not look on me?"

Thus appealed to, Mr. Harrington unclosed his eyes and gazed upon the wreck before him. He asked,

"Where have you been, Victor? and why have you so long concealed yourself from your family?"

"Because I was not worthy to belong to them. Where have I been, do you ask? I have been in bitterness—in temptation—in *guilt*! Yes, guilt, and all for the sake of one who now refuses the hand that has so dearly gained independence for her."

"What can you mean, my poor boy? Independence is not gained in a day, nor yet in a month."

"No—not by common means; but mine was a desperate case, and I took desperate measures to retrieve myself. I have watched with the dead, and felt my hair stiffen with horror as I saw the blue flames rising from their graves—for I thought they might be the spirits of the departed come to warn me from the sacrilege I meditated. Yet I persevered. I—yes, I did the deed. I secured the sparkling gems, but O! their touch burns me here, here," and he raised his hand to his forehead with a pathetic gesture.

"After all, Louise scorns me. Louise tramples on my hopes. She knows *all*! well, let her tell it. I care not now, for I am hopeless, hopeless."

There was an indescribable expression of utter desolation in the tones of his voice; his words sounded dull and hollow, as if the soul took no cognizance of their terrible meaning.

Those who listened fortunately possessed no clew to their true import, and they thought him delirious.

Adèle took his hand and tenderly drew him toward a seat.

"You look weary and worn, brother. Sit down and rest."

"Rest—there is no more rest for me. I am haunted by a useless crime. I dared every thing for *her*, and she has proved false to me—false—false—"

He yielded to the hand of his sister, and passively sat down upon the chair she drew forward for him; then he bent his head forward and wept bitterly. In silence the father gazed on the miserable wreck of his only and beloved son, and his

heart was filled with compassion toward him. At length he mildly said,

"Victor, you are young. You can redeem the misspent years of your life; and your father, from his bed of death, entreats you to make an effort to do so."

Victor only wept with the passionate emotion of a woman at these words. Mr. Harrington proceeded in a more impressive manner,

"My son, I bequeath to you, instead of the fortune I once hoped to bestow upon you, a struggle for the independence every man should be willing to gain for himself. You will be the sole protector of your aunt and sisters; think how much devolves upon you by my departure, and prove yourself worthy of the precious trust confided to you."

Victor checked his tears at these words, and regarded his father with a glassy stare, which showed imperfect consciousness of his meaning. But one word seemed to have made any distinct impression on him. He vaguely repeated,

"Trust—no; no—I am unworthy of trust. Do not ask any thing of that sort from me; because I—I'm not fit to accept it."

"Is he mad?" asked Mr. Harrington, despairingly. "Must this last anguish be added to all that has gone before?"

Miss Harrington had taken Victor's hand in her own, and she soothingly replied,

"Be not alarmed, brother; Victor has fever—he is delirious, not mad. He must be put to bed and nursed. Come



with me, my dear boy," she persuasively continued. "Come into my room and lie down a little while; presently you will feel better."

Victor arose, and pressing his hand upon his brow, seemed to be recalling his bewildered senses. An expression of softer feeling beamed from his eyes as he took his father's hand and pressed it reverently to his lips and heart. He said,

"Forgive me, dear father, for all the anguish I have occasioned you. I am less criminal than weak, but I trust in God all my evil deeds may never be revealed to you, in this world nor the next. Adèle, Pauline, adieu! Watch over our father, and repay him for my ingratitude."

With a more collected air, he followed his aunt from the room, and submitted to lie upon the bed in her own apartment, and take some composing drops which she pressed upon him. With the cunning of persons whose minds are slightly deranged, he knew that the only way to evade her solicitude was to follow her directions implicitly.

He soon closed his eyes, and seeing him apparently quiet, Miss Gertrude ventured to return to her brother, leaving Victor, she trusted, in a refreshing sleep. He listened to her retreating steps, and waited until voices were again heard from the room of his father, speaking in guarded tones. Then he cautiously arose, unclosed a door that opened into a central hall from which the staircase descended, and went in pursuit of his false love.

Every portion of the house was familiar to him, and he knew that he should, probably, find Louise in the drawing-

room, at that hour of the evening. He had not seen her since her note came to him, and he sought her now with a feeling of reckless desperation, which might impel him to he knew not, cared not, what.

He noiselessly opened the door of the room, and looked in. A solar lamp, with the light partly turned down, diffused a softened tint throughout the apartment. The evening was warm, and two large windows opening upon a yard filled with shrubbery, were unclosed, and the beams of a young moon fell in tremulous lines on the carpet. This room was distant from those usually occupied by the family, and Victor rejoiced that the hours for receiving visitors for the evening were past.

Beside one of the windows sat Louise, looking paler than usual, and he fancied that a tear glittered upon her cheek. He advanced so softly that she was not aware of his presence until he called her name. She nervously started up, and as she caught a view of his worn features, exclaimed,

"You here, Victor! I gave orders that you should at once be taken to your father's room. You know he is here? and—and—O Victor, Dr. Germain thinks that he can not live many hours."

"I am aware of that, Louise. I have seen him; have bidden him an eternal adieu; and now all that remains to me on earth is to settle with you."

There was something sinister in the tone of his voice, and the wild gleam of his eyes startled her into a suspicion of the truth. Trembling with fear, she faltered,

"What can you mean, cousin?"

"To take with me to the Inferno that spirit which has so wronged and outraged mine. Louise, I have sworn that no living man shall claim you as his bride, save myself. How, think you, is my oath to be accomplished?"

"I am sure I can not tell," she faltered, as she made an effort to glide past him and reach the door. He intercepted her, and drawing a pistol from his breast, he presented it toward her.

"I will enlighten you," he said. "Now call out, or attempt to alarm the house, and I use this weapon even before I have said all I came to say."

Louise had a peculiar dread of fire-arms, and she felt as if she should become insensible from terror; but she struggled against her fears, with the consciousness that in retaining perfect self-command her only chance of safety lay.

She said, slowly, and with outward composure,

"Put up your pistol, Victor; it might accidentally go off, and do me an injury. Such an accident must be fatal to your father in his present condition. Reflect an instant, and you will see that I have not deserved such unmanly treatment from you."

Her words seemed to have some weight with him. He placed the weapon on a table within reach of his hand, and drew forth the last communication she had sent him.

"Tell me, Louise, what this production means? Have you indeed given up all intention of fulfilling the troth so often and so solemnly plighted to me? What do you mean by the words, '*I know how it was obtained*,' referring to the independence I offered to share with you?"

There was an evident effort to preserve his calmness, as he thus spoke, but his voice quivered with the intensity of his emotion, and his eyes seemed to her like a devouring flame, as he fixed them on her whitening features.

How Louise wished some one would come in ! but no foot-steps approached. She feared to cry out, lest the excited being before her should destroy her before assistance could reach her ; and she read that in his face which assured her that he was desperate enough for any crime.

She did not reply, and he held the lines so close to her face as almost to touch it, as he again demanded,

"Your meaning—your meaning? I must know if you really are aware of all I have dared for your sake ; or is it a pitiable *ruse* to afford you an excuse for your most heartless and unwomanly conduct toward me."

"I did not wish to break with you, Victor," she pleaded. "Your own acts have placed a barrier between us, as I have there stated."

"My acts?—what are they? How did you know them? Speak—tell me, what *could* I do that would render me unworthy of *you*, false and hollow piece of deceit that I now know you to be."

"Your own conscience will tell you, Victor," she faintly said ; for her courage was rapidly giving way before the increasing fury of his gestures and expression. He repeated,

"My conscience ! I have none, I tell you. It was buried long since in the grave of principle. I have become a terror and a loathing to myself—and all through you. And now, do you fancy for one moment that I will ever permit Nevin

to snatch you from me? Tell me what you know, or my pistol shall at once do its predestined work; its fellow is ready to release me from the consequences, and I have no compunction in using them."

Again he placed his hand upon the weapon, and Louise felt that boldness alone could now save her. She pressed her hand upon her heart, to still its rapid beating, and said,

"Listen to me, Victor, and do not endeavor to frighten me thus, for I can not believe that your threats are made in earnest. You have committed a fearful crime for my sake: I pity you; I forgive you; and O, Victor, I love you still. Do not be so harsh—so cruel—you break my heart by acting thus."

At the allusion to his crime, Victor shuddered, and cast a fearful glance around. He spoke in a whisper, every tone of which seemed to vibrate with horror.

"The dead gibbered around me—the vault seemed lighted with flames from the Inferno; but I would not be baulked. Ha! look here, see what I won by my perseverance."

He drew forth a casket from his pocket, and, opening it, the flash of diamonds of singular luster and purity, was seen. A necklace of rose-diamonds, of large size, he drew forth, and said, with a ghastly smile,

"See how I can afford to deck you, Louise."

Before she was aware of his intention, he threw it over her bare neck. The touch of the gems which had so lately lain in contact with the dead overpowered the little fortitude Louise retained, and she sunk back insensible on the crimson velvet fauteuil in which she was seated.

Without heeding this, Victor proceeded in his task. He next drew forth an ornament for the head, in the shape of a coronet; this he carefully placed, then clasped the rings in the ears, the bracelets on her arms, and then lifting the nerveless hand, he placed in it the miniature scepter of which Nevin had spoken.

When all was done, he stood off and viewed the effect. The delicate and colorless features of the insensible girl, contrasted with the crimson back-ground against which she reclined, looked pure as marble. Her evening dress, of a pale rose tint, was cut so as to leave the fair neck and rounded arms partially bared; and the blaze of the jewels in the lamp-light, might, at a first glance, have induced one to believe that she was in grand toilette for some gay assemblage; but a second look at the fixed features and closed eyes would have startled the beholder into the belief that death was only mocked with this semblance of splendor.

Victor contemplated her in silence several moments, then he kneeled before her, and said,

“My queen of love and beauty, once—now my queen of death—most royally art thou decked for the sacrifice. Ha! ha! will not Nevin learn that his gems are well bestowed? even on her to whom he would have given them himself. But I am beforehand with him. I have the advantage this time, and I mean to keep it.”

He kissed the hand of the insensible girl—her lifeless lips—her brow, again, and again. Then he drew from his pocket a second pistol, and lifting the one on the table, he pointed it toward the heart of Louise. The other he placed

where his hand could grasp it the instant he dropped the first.

Then the madman paused; and fixing his eyes adoringly upon the face he had so worshiped, he said, in a tone of entreaty,

"Forgive me, darling, best loved one. I take you from a world that can only bring sorrow to your heart, and a blight upon your loveliness. I will not mar your beauty, my flower of Paradise; through your heart the messenger of release shall go, and you will not even feel the pain of death."

He raised himself on one knee, and deliberately took aim at the left side of the defenseless girl, who had not yet exhibited the slightest sign of returning consciousness. Not a muscle trembled, as he slowly raised his finger to touch the deadly trigger.

In another instant Louise would have been beyond help, when a swift step came noiselessly over the carpet, and a firm hand dashed up the weapon, with the exclamation,

"Madman! what would you do?"

Victor struggled violently, for he recognized the voice of his rival, and he endeavored to turn the weapon against him. Nevin wrenched his arm with a grasp of iron; as the pistol came in contact with the body of the hapless young man, it exploded, and the meditated assassin received the load in his own heart.

Victor fell dead upon the floor, and the report seemed to arouse Louise from her death-like swoon, for she unclosed her eyes, and looked vacantly around. Nevin snatched her in his arms, as if she had been a child, and rushed toward the door,

meeting in his precipitate retreat the affrighted members of the household, hurrying to the scene of blood.

"My daughter—what has happened to my daughter?" exclaimed Mrs. Ruskin, as she arrested him on the threshold.

"Your daughter is safe, but frightened into insensibility by the mad boy who lies yonder in death, madam. Let me place Louise in a place of safety, and I will explain what I know of this terrible affair."

Mrs. Ruskin at once led the way into her own chamber. By the time Louise was placed on the bed, the recollection of what had recently passed between herself and Victor came vividly back to her; and she started up, exclaiming,

"Where is my cousin? What has become of him?" then catching the gleam of the jewels that still decked her person, she frantically tore them off.

"Take them away—take them away. That madman must have decked me in them after I became insensible. O, where is he? will no one tell me what has become of him?"

"He is safe, Louise," replied Nevin, gravely. "He has no longer the power to harm you."

She regarded him with a frightened air—and then she said, in a faint tone,

"You have regained your jewels. You—you will cease all inquiry—quash all proceedings against him?"

"It is already done, Louise, by a higher power than mine."

She comprehended him at once, and vailing her eyes with her hand, she said,

"Lord—Lord of mercy, pardon for me—for him," and



sunk back exhausted by the various emotions she had endured within the last few hours.

This was no time to question her concerning what had preceded her swoon, and Nevin left the house to meet at once the inquiry he knew must be made into the catastrophe of the evening. He immediately went to the office of a magistrate and recounted the particulars of the struggle between himself and young Harrington. He stated that he had visited Mrs. Ruskin's family early in the evening, but having an engagement elsewhere, he left about eight o'clock for the purpose of fulfilling it. On his return home, it was a little out of his way to pass the house again, but he was impelled to do so, he knew not why. On reaching it the lights in the drawing-room were still burning, and although it was then past ten o'clock, the same internal monitor bade him enter. He did so, and was just in time to save the life of the eldest daughter of the family from the weapon of a madman; for there was every evidence to believe that Victor Harrington was no longer in a condition to be accountable for his actions. In the struggle that ensued the pistol exploded, taking the life of the unfortunate young man.

As no previous ill-feeling was known to have existed between them, his statement was received without question, and a verdict of accidental death returned by the coroner.

Thus a life in its early prime passed into oblivion, without a record of any thing save weakness and a want of self-control. How many such go up among the vast throng hourly crowding toward the portals of eternity, who shall say? To them, how awful must be the award of Him who gave the noble boon of life in vain.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

WHILE these terrible scenes were enacting below, Miss Gertrude had resumed her position beside the bed of her brother, and listened to his last directions with an earnest desire to comprehend them in such a manner as to render their execution comparatively easy. Mrs. Ruskin was summoned to the room, and received from Mr. Harrington ample security for the money due to her children. No temptation had been strong enough to induce him to use any portion of it for the relief of his own embarrassments. She accepted it with ill-concealed joy; for she had been reflecting on the best means of bringing forward her claims at once, from the moment she saw the precarious condition of her brother-in-law. She said,

“Thank you—this is very considerate, and only anticipates what I must have demanded in a few weeks. The marriage of Louise would have rendered a settlement necessary.”

Mr. Harrington sighed as he recalled the wasted wreck he had so lately looked on; he said,

“Louise has then entirely given up my poor boy?”

“Of course; what could you expect, brother? Louise marries a man of great wealth: Victor could give her neither home nor position.”

"That, alas! is too true. Let us not speak of what is so painful to me. Gertrude—my children, have patience with the lorn and blighted life of my poor boy. Lead him back, by gentle means, to hope and happiness. Teach him wherein lies the true life, and seek to elevate him to your own noble standard."

"We will—we pledge ourselves to make every effort to do so," was the reply of those to whom he addressed himself.

Mrs. Ruskin privately thought the task thus undertaken at least a very difficult one to perform, and by no means certain as to the result, but she wisely said nothing.

"Do not weary yourself with talking so much, dear father," pleaded Adèle. Mr. Harrington faintly smiled, as he replied,

"Any sudden excitement may seal my lips forever, my darling, I feel from the rapid pulsation of my poor old heart; and I must speak what is on my mind before I go. My next words are for you, Adèle. Philip loves you; he has told me so himself; and I know that he is worthy of you. I once hoped to live and retain him near me, where I could provide for the happy future of both—for you are not indifferent to him, I believe. Is it not so, my love?"

Adèle bowed her head, and murmured,

"I will not deny it, father."

"That is right, my love; Evelyn will wish you to unite your fate to his at once; but hearken to the advice of your best friend, and remember it when I am gone. In their change of fortune, your aunt and sister will need your presence for a while, to brighten their home, for yours is now the glad spirit of our household, and you must not permit

my loss to weigh you down. Remember that I go really to a better land, from which I sincerely believe I shall be permitted to watch over your welfare. Promise me, all of you, that you will check your grief for my loss, that you will seek such sunshine as life may now offer to you."

The promise was tearfully given, and he again proceeded,

"Let Philip return to his own home and seek such employment as may afford him a competence. Let the grass grow above my last resting-place, and then, my daughter, seek your new home with its cares and pleasures, bearing to it a hopeful heart. That Providence which uprooted and destroyed one earthly abiding-place, will, I feel assured, smile on the creation of another, in which will dwell two good and true spirits, that love and trust each other."

"Dearest father, it shall be as you desire," murmured the weeping girl. He passed his hand caressingly over her bowed head, and then drew Pauline toward him.

"This blow will be hardest for you to sustain, my daughter. Bear it patiently, meekly, and He who sent it will, in his own good time, also send peace to the desolate chambers of your soul."

"If I could only go with you," she sobbed. "Of what use can my weary life be to any one, when I almost feel it as a burden to myself?"

"My love, you have suffered deeply. Thus you have learned compassion for those who have also felt the chastening hand of affliction. It will teach you to be tender to the erring; to bind up the broken heart and minister to the

bruised spirit. Such are God's angels on earth ; remember that our divine Master was 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' ”

“ I do remember it. I have tried to conquer myself. I have prayed ; but the passionate human spirit refused to be comforted. Christ was divine—”

“ And also human : in weighing his sufferings, do not forget that, my darling, and then, perhaps, you will have a truer comprehension of them. Struggle against your own weakness, and He will send the strength of His divine faith, to comfort and sustain you.”

“ I promise to make the effort,” said the poor girl, weeping convulsively ; for it seemed to her that the last tie that bound her to life was about to be severed.

Presently Mr. Harrington spoke to his sister,

“ What did you propose to do, Gertrude, when you alluded to your own efforts to increase the pittance I shall be enabled to leave you ? ”

“ The Grange is situated in a thickly-populated neighborhood, where there are many wealthy people. The first idea that occurred to me, was to establish a select school there. You know that my education originally fitted me for that sphere, and the supervision I maintained over that of your daughters has not permitted my attainments to grow rusty. I can be the head of the establishment, while Pauline and Adèle assist in the department of music and modern languages.”

“ It is a good thought,” he began, but Mrs. Ruskin uncere-  
moniously broke in,

"What! will you lower yourself so much? Will you lose caste by attempting to do any thing toward your own support when there will really be no absolute necessity for it?"

She appeared quite excited, and Miss Gertrude quietly replied,

"It seems to me that, in a country like ours, no honorable employment that brings independence, should be thus spoken of. The loss of caste you refer to, is, I presume, only loss of wealth; and included with that, of course, the desertion of the summer friends that flutter around the prosperous."

Mrs. Ruskin only looked scornfully, and asked,

"What need will there be of such extreme measures? The estate must leave at least a support for you all, after it is wound up."

"A bare support, which we will make an independence; for we are neither afraid nor ashamed to labor," replied Miss Harrington. "The small pittance that can honestly be rescued from my brother's property might afford a mere living for us, stripped of every refinement and every elegance to which we have been accustomed. Is it not far better to use our own abilities to procure those things than to feel the want of them every day? and, in the absence of employment, probably, to repine at their loss? That is one view, and the most selfish one. On the other hand, we may become the means of accomplishing much good to others, in the new path opened before us."

Mrs. Ruskin replied, with a sneer,

"You always had the strangest ideas, Gertrude, that ever any woman of good sense before entertained. Pray let this mad scheme alone, until my nieces have time to look around them. Adèle may marry in such a manner as to render any thing of this kind unnecessary. She is so uncommonly handsome that even without fortune she can choose among those who can save her from this."

This discussion carried on, in such a tone, before her father in his present condition, shocked Adèle, and she raised her head, and replied to her unfeeling aunt,

"I shall never barter myself for wealth to obviate the necessity of using the faculties nature has bestowed on me. So far as I am concerned, I will aid Aunt Gertrude with heart and hand."

"And I also," said Pauline, decisively, as she arose, and, crossing the room, brought her prayer-book back with her. To end the discussion which she saw was painful to her father, she asked him if she should read aloud to him a portion of the visitation to the sick.

"Thank you, my love," he said—"I will gladly listen to it—to-morrow I will see a clergyman; to-night be you my spiritual ministrant."

He smiled fondly on her, and she sat down where the light from the shaded lamp fell upon the page. All composed themselves to listen, and Mr. Harrington lay with his eyes closed as the sweet tones of the reader floated around him. In many of the most consoling portions his lips moved as if he repeated the words after her, and never had they seemed so significant to him.

When she had concluded, her father said,

"The works of Franklin are here, I know. Get the volume containing his letter to Miss Hubbard, on the death of his brother, and read it to me." Mr. Harrington then told her the volume and page in which she would find it, showing that he was perfectly familiar with it already. Pauline left the room a few moments, and soon returned with the book; and the sick man listened with rapt attention as she read the beautiful and consoling language there found on the subject of death. He wrote,

"We have lost a most dear and valuable relation. But it is the will of God and nature that these mortal bodies be laid aside when the soul is to enter into real life. This is rather an embryo state: a preparation for *living*. A man is not completely born until he is dead. Why then should we grieve that a new child is born among the immortals? a new member added to their happy society? *We are spirits*. That bodies should be lent us while they can afford us pleasure, assist us in acquiring knowledge, or doing good to our fellow-creatures, is a kind and benevolent act of God. When they become unfit for these purposes, and afford us pain instead of pleasure—instead of an aid, become an incumbrance, and answer none of the intentions for which they were given, it is equally kind and benevolent that a way is provided by which we may get rid of them.

"Death is that way. We ourselves, in some cases, prudently choose a partial death. A mangled, painful limb, which can not be restored, we willingly cut off. He who plucks out a tooth, parts with it freely, since the pain goes



with it; and he who quits the whole body, parts at once with all pains and possibilities of pains and diseases it was liable to, or capable of making him suffer."

"Our friend and we were invited abroad on a party of pleasure which is to *last forever*. His chair was ready first, and he is gone before us. We could not conveniently start together; and why should you and I be grieved at this, since we are soon to follow, and *know where to find him*."

She ceased, and Mr. Harrington said,

"How beautiful, how consoling, is such a view of the inevitable parting of soul and body; and I more than ever realize how true are his sublime consolations. Read those words again, and yet again, my beloved ones, when I am no longer with you, and they will speak peace to your souls. We gaze with silent awe into the dimming eyes in which flickers the last expiring gleams of that intelligence which has illumined earth: which is soon to mingle among angels to claim the bright reward of a struggle well sustained—then why should we grieve for the departure of such a one? O death! best and truest friend of humanity! why have the fears and superstitions of man made thee a grisly phantom of terror? The flower falleth to the earth, and from its seed springs a richer abundance in the future; so shall the soul of man expand as a flower in the glories of the perfect day."

While this Christian and philosopher thus discoursed on the approach of the shining angel, a profound stillness reigned throughout the mansion; suddenly this was interrupted by the report of a pistol which rang sharp, clear, and distinct through the silence of night.

Mrs. Ruskin rushed from the room, and Mr. Harrington started up with an exclamation: the sudden rush of blood through his heart was more than his exhausted condition could bear, and he had scarcely gained an upright position, when he fell back, dead.

Thus did Heaven, in its mercy, spare him a knowledge of what was passing below. The angel of death folded him in his shining mantle and bore him to that "home eternal in the heavens, prepared for them that love God and keep His commandments."

Occupied with this sudden catastrophe, those around him did not leave the apartment to learn the cause of the tumult below; and when Mrs. Ruskin at last returned, it was easy for her to account for it in a plausible manner, without betraying the terrible scene that had ended so tragically. That Victor had again disappeared they soon knew; but his movements of late had been so erratic, that much as they were distressed at his apparent want of respect to the last rites due to his father, they never suspected the truth.

Many weeks after his quiet burial, the sisters were informed of his accidental death from the explosion of a pistol he held carelessly in his hand; but the particulars were never made known to them. They were shocked and grieved at such a catastrophe; but after the first sorrow had passed away they submitted to that wisdom which had seen fit to cut short a life which promised no good result; and in all human probability would have been filled with much that was evil.

Miss Harrington followed the injunctions of her brother as literally as possible. The creditors were surprised at the offer

made to them to compromise at once, and did so with more liberality than she anticipated. The Grange, a small place containing about fifty acres of land, and such improvements as rendered it habitable, together with six negroes, to be selected by themselves, were secured to the daughters of Mr. Harrington, and the estate passed into the hands of strangers.

The plantation of Wavertree was a desolate waste. The subsiding waters left an immense deposit of sand which choked up the drains; all the houses had been undermined by the flood, and were in a state of dilapidation. The mansion was an utter wreck. One visit was made to it by its late inmates, but they suffered so much in beholding the ruin of their beloved home that a tacit resolution was made by each one never again to seek the spot where so much happiness had once dwelt.

The negroes were sold to a neighboring proprietor, to whom they chose to go; and a most trying scene it was to the sisters when they came to bid adieu to those under whose rule they had hoped to live and die. Cries, sobs, and benedictions were heard on every side, and the young ladies wept with them at the inevitable separation.

They were permitted to select those they were to retain, and a difficult task it was to choose among so many, all equally anxious to be the favored ones. With many tears and much heart-breaking emotion, the choice was finally made, and then they reproached themselves for the preference they had shown the chosen ones, when they heard the bless-

ings of the others, and their assurances that "they had done for the best, and as all could not go, it was but right that they should select such as could be most useful to them in their new mode of life."

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

WE have hurried over the painful events in the life of our fair heroines which the last few weeks had unfolded ; because such things, though almost of daily occurrence, are too full of anguish to be dwelt on, even by the pen of the story-teller. How many of the incidents of this "ower true tale" will come home, as a sad reality of by-gone years, to hearts that have been rived to their very core by such family ruin as we have just depicted, from that actual experience which enables us to turn back in fancy to that terrible hour

"When hearts were gushing in pale despair,  
O'er the joys of the home no longer there."

We will now follow the three severely-tried ones to their new abode. The Grange was situated several miles from the river on a romantic lake which is supposed once to have been a portion of the Mississippi thrown into its present isolated position by the impetuous current forcing its way through a new channel, thus leaving this long shining reach of water insulated and calm. It is many miles in extent, and bears all the peculiar characteristics of the Father of Waters, save that its banks are green and sloping, and offer, in many places, exquisite nooks in which the disciples of Isaac Walton may

find as rare sport as ever was chronicled even by that enthusiast in angling.

The house fronted a curve in the lake, and four gigantic forest trees interlaced their branches over the green bank that fell in natural terraces toward the water. A small yard filled with fruit-trees, mingled with a few magnolias of large size, was in front of the cottage. This was of wood painted white, with a light green verandah in front, over which a rose-bush twined its luxuriant creepers.

The place had been improved by a French creole, and in accordance with their usual custom, in place of building one large house, several smaller ones had been preferred. The central cottage contained three rooms—two in front, opening on the verandah, and one the whole length of the building, in the rear. These were appropriated as parlor, dining-room, and bed-room by Miss Harrington and her nieces, and such furniture as had been saved from the wreck at Waver-tree was transferred to them.

There were two smaller houses on either side of the yard, facing toward the principal cottage. One of these contained two rooms fitted up for guests; the other had been converted into a school-room, by tearing away the partition which divided the apartments, and throwing them into one. This was well shaded, and kept with delicate attention to neatness.

This was a very paradise of a school-room; and the young faces that peeped forth from its shelter during the week were as bright and sparkling as health, happiness, and employment could make them. Miss Gertrude possessed the rare tact of gaining the affectionate respect of her pupils, and they vied

with each other in endeavoring to obtain her approbation : and each young heart in the school felt it to be a privilege to be instructed by the lovely sisters.

Pauline, with her pale pensive face, and subdued manner, seemed to them like a pure spirit from some higher sphere, lent for a while to this, to show the beauty of self-abnegation to these young being, born to bear the burden of that life which must inevitably bring with it sorrow, struggle, temptation, and death.

In Adèle they beheld the incarnation of beauty of soul, in a physical frame worthy to enshrine it ; and each one thought in her heart that the seraphs in heaven could not be more beautiful, or more angelic in temper than their lovely instructress.

The necessity of immediate exertion had been an inexpressible benefit to the bereaved family. Unavailing sorrow, over losses that were irreparable was forcibly repressed ; that, as far as possible, they might fulfill the last wishes of him whose memory was reverently and tenderly cherished by them ; and every energy was tasked to execute their plans without delay.

Philip Evelyn remained with them until they were settled in their new home, and the school fairly under way. The desire to establish such a seminary was eagerly responded to by the most intelligent families in the vicinity, who were anxious to educate their daughters without sending them from home. The accomplishments of the teachers insured them more than the limited number of pupils they were willing to take ; and in the occupation thus afforded, they found tempo-

rary forgetfulness of their recent afflictions, if not oblivion to them.

It was a bright evening in early Autumn: it was Friday evening; the labors of the week were over, and the little family hailed the interval of repose offered by the two days to come with feelings of quiet gratitude that the path they had so resolutely and nobly opened for themselves had, thus far, been so easy to walk in. They still sat beneath their own vine and fig-tree, independent, and blessed with contentment in the society and affection of each other.

On this evening the servant had been to the post-office, and brought back letters for each one. Miss Gertrude and Pauline sat on the verandah and read theirs, while Adèle took hers and strolled down to a quiet nook on the edge of the lake, where she sat down beneath an old tree to peruse the beautiful effusions of heart-felt affection addressed to her by her absent lover.

Miss Harrington's letter was from Mrs. Ruskin, and it was filled with complaints that after all the expense of preparing a bridal trousseau for Louise suited to the position she was to occupy as the wife of Nevin, the match was likely to prove a failure. The gentleman had perversely taken the idea into his head that he was not first in the affections of her daughter.

Nevin, she said, was about to embark for Europe with their *ci-devant* friend, Mr. Malcolm, who had suddenly appeared in the city after several months' absence, no one knew where, as he did not choose to enlighten them. There was much more in the same querulous strain, and the writer ended by signing herself the most unfortunate and ill-used woman in the world.



Louise had also written to Pauline with much of her usual flippancy. She said,

"Ma is groaning in spirit over the desertion of Mr. Nevin, as she chooses to consider it. *I* do not, however, regard it as an irreparable misfortune. I had not by any means embarked all my hopes in one frail argosy, as some poet most absurdly said—as if any woman of sense would do such a thing. The sighing, pining, die-away sort of feminines may do this, perhaps; but they are not at all to my taste, and I decline following their lachrymose example.

"If my heart could have broken, it would have been when poor Victor met his untimely fate. I know you will believe me, Pauline, when I tell you that I sincerely loved him; though you, with your different nature, will scarcely be able to comprehend this affection for one man, when worldliness was hurrying me into a union with another. All that was true in me was developed by that affection; the rest is the result of the training I have received, in some measure, though I am afraid that Nature, when she formed me, used the elements of the butterfly in place of giving me the grand passionate soul which makes or mars a woman's destiny."

"Perhaps, after all, my mother did the best she could with the materials she had to work on; but such as I am, be assured that my heart is not going to break because my rich lover thinks his high-mightiness occupies a lower place in my affections than some one else once claimed."

"Mr. Nevin goes to Europe with ——, I do not know that I should name him, for I believe he caused my uncle much

trouble, and some say, laid the foundation of all his subsequent misfortunes ; but let that be as it may, I hate mysteries, and I must tell you that Mr. Malcolm has returned to the city, and goes to Europe on an extended tour. He says it may last his lifetime. I wonder if he will go alone forever, like the Wandering Jew ; or if he will yet seek some 'glad spirit for his minister.'

He looks as if he stands sadly in need of something to enliven him, for a more absent, self-absorbed being, it would be difficult to find. He makes no effort to interest others, but glides like the wraith of his former self, through the scenes of which he was once the ornament and pride. Thus passeth the glory of the world ; see what a moralizing vein I am in, and lest you should grow weary of it, I will close my epistle, with assurances of my continued appreciation, in spite of your horrid seclusion in that humble cottage, throwing away your fine acquirements, and your youth, in guiding little untaught creoles up the ascent of knowledge. I trust that a sufficient portion of the spirit of Job has been transfused into your individuality to enable you to bear the burden of such a lot with patience. As to myself, I believe that I would prefer annihilation to such a destiny.

With kind regards to my aunt and Adèle, I am, as ever,  
your affectionate friend and cousin,                      LOUISE RUSKIN.

Pauline silently handed the letter over to her aunt. Miss Gertrude read it, and remarked,

"I believe Louise will ever remain the same. No misfortune can long subdue her spirits."

Pauline sighed heavily. She said,

"After all, such light, unimpressible natures enjoy life most. I would give much to be able to rise, Phoenix like, from the ashes of affliction, as Louise does. She loved poor Victor, but not as he loved her."

"No—how should she? Intense and overwrought feeling seems the heritage of my brother's children; and a fearful one it is, as Victor too fatally knew. I own that I like Louise better since reading her letter; if she could have permitted her marriage to go on so soon after the poor boy's tragic end I should never have respected her again."

"Aunt, have you ever been able to learn all the particulars of that—that—"

She faltered and grew pale at the recollection of that night of agony, when the sound of the explosion which carried death to her brother, by some mysterious and powerful sympathy, also stilled the pulses of her beloved father's heart forever. Miss Gertrude looked disturbed, for all the occurrences of that fatal night had been made known to her, though she studiously concealed them from her nieces. She replied,

"Victor was accidentally shot, my dear. Let that suffice. It is a painful subject, which can not very well bear discussion."

Pauline sank into a reverie, in which her brother, as she had last seen him, at first occupied the most prominent place; but gradually his image faded from her musings, and another, whose name had stirred, to their very depths, the pulses of the heart she hoped was growing indifferent to him, came

before her fancy. She beheld him as described by Louise, and again the surges of desolation swept over her spirit ; and the sad requiem of unrequitted love floated silently upward from her sternly tried soul.

"Will I *never* be free from this anguish?" she mentally asked. "O why will my foolish heart cling to him who is indifferent to me, with this everlasting yearning to be all things to him? I have tasked all the strength of my spirit to drive his memory far, far from me, and all in vain. The very sight of his name on this senseless piece of paper, awakens a thousand emotions which assure me that I love him as tenderly, as exclusively as ever.

"And he, too, the minister of so much evil to my beloved father ; O, I feel that it is almost a wrong to his memory to give one kind thought to this man, yet I can not help it !"

While Pauline thus struggled with memories of the past, Adèle sat beneath the trees with a bright smile and heightened color, and felt that joy in her heart with which the "stranger intermeddleth not." Her sweet yet rational dream of love was sacred to her as is the holy fire to the Eastern worshiper. Philip Evelyn's poet soul was breathed in every line of his letter, and the young girl thanked Heaven that amid all the sad reverses of her lot, the love of such a man had been bestowed upon herself. Evelyn informed her of the arrangements he had already commenced making for their future home.

Aided by his brother-in-law, he had established the scientific department in the college in which Mr. Graves was pro-

fessor of languages, and it promised soon to be in a flourishing condition.

The salary from it would be amply sufficient to support them in comfort, and promised to be still better in the future. Philip described a beautiful cottage, romantic enough to be "wedded love's first home," which his father had purchased for him, and which he had commenced beautifying for the reception of his lovely bride. By the time she would take possession he hoped the grounds around would be a paradise of sweets, reminding her of the luxuriant vegetation and gorgeous flowers of her own southern land.

The roof, too, was overshadowed by an immense oak; not so grand and imposing as the magnificent tree from which her early home had derived its name, but still of noble proportions, and this, too, should bear the beloved name of Wavertree, if Adèle approved.

She read his letter twice, and then resting her head against the trunk of the tree, at whose foot she sat, and casting her eyes over the placid waters before her, Adèle surrendered her mind to the beautiful dreams and emotions that filled it. Twilight was slowly stealing over the earth; the glowing western sky was fading and the first bright star of evening already cast a long line of tremulous light upon the calm surface of the lake.

Suddenly a footstep broke the stillness, and Adèle looked up, expecting to behold her aunt or sister.

A tall, stately form stood beside her, which, at a glance, she recognized; she arose precipitately, her cheek alternately paling and flushing with agitation, for the intruder was so

vividly associated in her mind with the troubles and ruin of her father as to cause his presence to be a painful oppression, from which she would gladly escape. She hastily said,

"Mr. Malcolm, I scarcely expected to see you again. Pardon me, if I also add that I had no desire ever again to meet you."

"You are candid, at least, Miss Harrington," he said, with an accent of pained bitterness. "Yet I entreat that you will endeavor to control your antipathy to me while I speak a few words which must, for my own peace, be uttered."

He had taken off his hat, and as the fading light fell on his features, Adèle saw that he looked dejected and pale, and her sympathetic heart was touched by this appearance of suffering in one who had seemed too self-sustained to betray such evidences of his kindred with the common lot of humanity. She more gently asked,

"Is it of importance to me, that you thus seek me?"

"It may be; I scarcely know; you must decide on that."

He seemed collecting his thoughts, and he remained silent so long that the young girl looked apprehensively toward the cottage, fearing that her sister might come out to seek her, and thus discover who was her companion. At length she said,

"Excuse me, Mr. Malcolm, but it grows late, and I must return to the house. If you have any thing important to say to me, pray lose no time."

"Adèle, I know not how to begin; how to word the offer I came to make. Let me restore you to the sphere to which

you rightfully belong. Let me be the medium by which wealth may be restored to all you love."

"And is this your errand here?" she coldly asked. "I thought that question had been set at rest long since. If you were not satisfied with the answer you received last winter, permit me to reiterate it. No inducement could be offered that could tempt me to become your wife.

Malcolm bowed with his most stately air.

"I fully comprehended that at the time, Miss Harrington; and I have become reconciled to the decision in the months of absence which have since passed. Removed from the influence of your entrancing beauty, knowing you to be devoted to another, the mist of passion fell from my heart, and too late for my own happiness or that of one revered in my inmost spirit as a being too pure, too noble, to belong to such as I am, the voice of truth made itself heard."

There was inexpressible melancholy in the tones of his ringing voice, and Adèle listened in silent surprise to this unexpected revelation. She slowly said,

"It is then as I have always said: the true love was given to my sister? O! how have you sinned against her, against yourself!"

"I know it—I feel it—but it is now too late. I never can throw my heart at her feet to be spurned, as it deserves."

"Why then have you sought this interview? What am I to understand by your offer to become the medium by which fortune is to be restored to my family?"

"Simply this: I tempted your father to embark in speculations which laid the foundation of all his subsequent mis-

fortunes. He gave me important aid, by which I made large sums of money. It seems to me only just that I shall atone to his children by returning to them at least a portion of these gains. I conjure you, Adèle, to let no false pride interfere, and prompt the rejection of what my conscience tells me is justly yours."

Adèle was greatly touched by his earnest and impassioned manner, but she gently and firmly replied,

"Mr. Malcolm, this may not be. We do not need your bounty, and it would lower our standard of independence too greatly to accept it."

"But I have wronged you—I feel it—I know it. Let me atone in the only manner now left open to me," he pleaded. "Adèle, it is no longer the lover, but the friend, who offers what he can not honestly keep."

"Give it then in deeds of charity to those who need it. We are contented in our new sphere; reflect an instant on all that is past and gone, Mr. Malcolm, and you will feel the impossibility of accepting what you would bestow."

"Content!" he repeated bitterly. "What a dim shadow of happiness is that! And Pauline, the angel of destiny, whose ministrations I madly slighted, is condemned to this life of toil and mental drudgery. I tell you, Adèle, if I could redeem the past I would give the best blood in my heart to be enabled to do so."

Adèle could not forbear saying, half-reproachfully,

"Had you known your own mind sooner, Mr. Malcolm, all the misery that has ensued might have been spared."

"Ah! that is my bitterest reproach! I loved you both,



strange as the avowal may seem. Your transcendant beauty dazzled and bewildered me ; and when I gazed on you with the faintest hope that I might ultimately win you, it stifled the whispered voice which always assured me that the true, sacred, and enduring flame of love was lighted by Pauline, alone, I wronged her ; I cruelly trampled on her heart, and mine now bleeds for every wound she received from me. Adèle, do you think I may dare to tell her this ?”

She was deeply embarrassed, and hesitated how to reply to him. She was firmly impressed with the belief that her sister would not now listen to his suit. The silent struggles of Pauline had been confined to her own bosom ; and Adèle believed that calmness, founded on indifference, had at last returned to the wounded heart. She feared that overtures from Malcolm would only lacerate it anew, and she at length replied,

“I believe it is now too late. Pauline has so long believed herself unloved, that you will not be able to convince her of the sincerity of your affection. She will probably think you seek her from a feeling of pity.”

Malcolm sighed heavily.

“I believe you are right ; and I, who have caused her so much suffering, have no right to inflict an additional pang upon her pride. I will not consider your refusal of my offer of restitution as final, Miss Harrington, until two weeks have passed by without any communication from you. At the end of that time I shall leave my native land, perhaps forever. Permit me to bid you adieu, and to hope that in the lot you have chosen, you may find happiness.”

Adèle suffered him to take her hand in his and carry it to his lips ; for by the magic sway his manner exercised over even those who were inimical to him, Malcolm compelled her forgiveness of the past.

“ Adieu,” he murmured ; “ I can not ask to be remembered by her who dwells alone and apart in my heart, as a being worthy of its entire homage. Speak not to her of what has passed between us, if you dream that its knowledge may bring a pang to her heart.”

As he turned away the voice of Pauline was heard from the cottage, chanting an evening hymn. The rich, full tones of her charming voice filled the air around him, and Malcolm listened with mingled emotions of pleasure and regret. This might have been the music of his home had he not played a double part, and execrating the blindness of heart which prevented him from appreciating it, until it was too late, he went on his sorrowful way.

Adèle returned to the cottage in a considerable flurry of spirits ; the recent interview had been both painful and consolatory to her ; and she felt the necessity of communicating its chief purport to her aunt and sister ; they must be consulted as to the final refusal of Malcolm’s offer of restitution ; she did not doubt their course, but she had no right to withhold a knowledge of it from them. But how much more should she tell ?

She looked at the transparent cheek of Pauline, beheld the almost saint-like tranquillity of her expression, and she feared to disturb this calm. She believed her love for Malcolm dead, why then again unfold that painful leaf in her destiny ? No

—let it remain closed; and when she related the recent interview, she suppressed every allusion to his avowed affection for her sister.

At the first mention of his name, Pauline raised her hand and shaded her face from the light; but Adèle saw that she listened with unchanging cheek to the narrative she gave in as few words as possible.

Before Miss Gertrude could speak, Pauline quietly said,

“You acted perfectly right, Adèle. I would rather toil to the last hour of my life, than be indebted to Mr. Malcolm for any thing. If, as I fully believe, my father can now behold us, he approves of what you have done.”

“You have exactly expressed my sentiments,” said Miss Gertrude; “and now let us dismiss this painful subject.”

She then spoke of Philip, and in listening to his plans for the future, and interesting herself in the happiness of Adèle, the aunt soon dismissed Malcolm from her mind.

Pauline listened with interest at first, but soon her fancy wandered to the late visitor, and she would have given much to know if he had come in the downfall of their fortunes to ask her sister to share his wealth with him.

Many long months passed away before she summoned courage to ask this question. It was not until the eve of Adèle's own marriage, and departure for Virginia, that she gained self-command to maintain the outward control necessary to sustain the semblance of indifference to the reply.

Then Adèle revealed all. There could no longer be danger in so doing, for her sister was now fancy-free. With a glad laugh she told her that her own words had indeed been true:

that Malcolm's passion for herself had been the delusive mirage, while the preference he really entertained for Pauline was the true manna of spiritual life to both mind and heart.

O what a flood of gladness did this revelation pour into the poor weary heart! What new impulses did it breathe into life! After the cold winter of neglect, a gleam of warm tropical sunshine poured its revivifying rays into the region so long desolate, and spring again bloomed there.

They might never meet again on earth, but Malcolm had loved her. He still cherished her memory. Ah! that was happiness enough for that solitary and beautiful life.

Devoted to the elevation and improvement of others, one ray of brightness was sufficient to warm and illumine the path she trod; that narrow and shining path leading to the throne of the Eternal.

In the years that glided silently by, many sought her, but her beautiful dream of constancy was never for one instant shadowed by the worldly temptations which were offered her to change her useful and honorable position.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

Six years, with all their manifold changes, have passed away since the close of the last chapter, and the course of our story now takes us to the emporium of modern civilization, Paris.

Malcolm had wandered over the whole of Europe, finding amusement first, then ennui, lastly discontent. A deep and strong yearning was in his soul to return once more to his native land. In twilight that Ave Maria sanctissima, rang in his soul, and he would have given much to behold the singer once more face to face, with the same kindly light in her eyes which once had beamed on him from them.

Perhaps one cause of this intense desire to renew the past was his own failing health. An accident had occurred to him on a railway train on which he was traveling, that caused a severe internal injury, which baffled the skill of his physicians, and he believed his days were numbered.

He received constant communications from the United States, and he was well informed of the position of the sisters.

He knew that for the last five years Adèle had been the happy wife of Evelyn, and their fortunes had prospered in their quiet way. That Pauline still assisted her aunt in the school, which had now become quite a distinguished institution

for young ladies. That she steadily discouraged all offers of marriage; and he felt that the one love had been to her too sacred to be desecrated by even dreaming of a second passion. He mused deeply, and decided on his plans.

"I will seek Pauline, now that I feel death slowly but surely approaching. By the time I reach my native land my life will be at its last ebb; then, perhaps, she will not refuse me the right to bestow on her the wealth I possess. I must make the attempt, at all events, for 'tis the only hope that now gives interest to life."

In pursuance of this design, Malcolm lost no time in making arrangements for his departure. A faithful servant, who had accompanied him throughout his whole tour, attended to every thing with care and dispatch, and a first class steamer was soon found, on which a passage was taken.

On his first arrival in France, Malcolm had endeavored to pursue the clew in his possession which might lead to the restitution of the money embezzled by Withers. He traced Mrs. Dalton and her young protégée to the hotel at Havre, where they had remained several days. Beyond there, no trace of them could be found, and he was compelled, reluctantly, to give up the hope of restoring to the sisters what was so indisputably theirs that they could not refuse to receive it.

In the years that had since intervened, the subject had been dismissed from his mind so completely that even the names of the parties interested were scarcely remembered.

On the evening before setting out for Havre, for the purpose of embarking, a note, written in a delicate female hand, was brought in by a Parisian friend. The address was to Mal-

colm, and with slight surprise he broke the seal, and read the following lines :

"A fellow-countryman will pardon a stranger who needs a friend, for thus introducing herself to his notice, and at the same time asking a favor of him.

"I am a young and unprotected girl, left thus by the recent death of the only friend I possess. Thus situated, I am extremely anxious to return to the land of my birth, and if Mr. Malcolm will permit me to become the companion of his voyage, I promise not to be a troublesome addition to his suite. M. Lesane, who kindly offers to deliver this, will explain all that is necessary. Respectfully,

"GRACE W. H. DALTON."

"What does this mean, Lesane?" inquired Malcolm. "I am scarcely in a condition to become a squire of dames across the Atlantic."

"O, you need not put yourself out about this little girl; she will not expect much attention, and she only wishes to get safe back to America, under the protection of some one who will keep her from feeling perfectly forlorn when on shipboard. What she desires to go back for I can not tell, for she has no relatives there to claim her."

"Who is she?"

"An American child, adopted by an eccentric Englishwoman, who has recently died. For several years they have lived together in the pension in which Miss Dalton received her education. She is accomplished, and is, I believe, quite an

heiress in her own right. It does not much matter about her having kindred, for with the means she possesses she can purchase friends enough. She has great enthusiasm for her native land, and is very anxious to return to it; hence her wish to avail herself of your escort."

Malcolm listened with interest.

"Of course I can not refuse such a request. Tell her how much of an invalid I am, if you please, that she may not expect the attentions I should otherwise bestow on her. Say to Miss Dalton that if she will meet me on the steamer, I will, from the hour of our embarkation, consider her under my protection, and do the best I can to place her in a satisfactory position when we reach New Orleans."

"That is all she desires. I will take her to Havre myself, and see her comfortably established on the ship. *Au revoir*, try and get better in the prospect of seeing fatherland again."

"Ah! I might if there was any one there to welcome me," was the bitter thought of the poor invalid as he turned his weary head away, oppressed with the languor of lonely suffering. The name of Dalton had struck a confused cord in his memory, but his mind was not in a state to recall any thing with accuracy; and after a few moments' reflection he dismissed it from his thoughts.

Three days afterward the young lady and her escort met in the cabin of the steamer. Malcolm was slightly better; and he was able to recline in a large comfortably fashioned chair for several hours before retiring to his state-room. Illness had bleached his superbly cut features almost to the hue of marble; and the brown rings of hair which lay



above his transparent temples were thickly sprinkled with gray.

In the years of lonely wandering, the expression of his face had changed. The look of haughty pride was gone, for remorse and humiliation had done their work; and in humbleness of spirit he asked to be permitted to remedy the great wrong he had been the means of inflicting upon an innocent family, even to the sacrifice of his own life. To die then would be easy: but death was a terror until he had made ample atonement for all the past.

In a few moments after he was seated, Lesane came forward, accompanied by a young girl of sedate air and quiet manner, wearing a black traveling dress, relieved at the throat and wrists by a white crape collar and cuffs. Her hair, of raven blackness, lay in shining bands upon her head, looking as if a single hair had never been out of order since it grew there. Her complexion was dark, but transparently clear, and the soft hue of health glowed in the ruby tinge of her cheeks and lips. Her eyes were dark and singularly sweet in their expression, as they beamed from beneath a clear, broad forehead on which sincerity was stamped. The mouth was too wide, but it was smiling, and the teeth even and white.

Altogether, little Miss Dalton was quite an attractive person, if not a regular beauty. As her eyes fell on Malcolm, she gave a little start, and then a perplexed expression stole over her features, though she addressed him with the ease and grace of a Frenchwoman.

“You have conferred a great favor on me, monsieur, by

taking me under your charge. I have been most anxious, for several months, to return to my native land. As you are going directly to New Orleans, I made bold to ask you to give me your protection on the voyage thither."

"You honored me, mademoiselle, by so doing. The trust is one I can but indifferently fulfill in my present condition, but I will do my best."

"Thank you, monsieur," she replied, in a tone that assured him that a perfect understanding was established between them at once.

Grace seemed to feel that the difference in their years authorized her to offer him the attentions of a daughter, and she soon quietly assumed the responsibility of preparing his medicines, and, when too weary to read himself, she selected such books as she thought would amuse him, and read aloud to him many hours of the day. She was also a skillful player of such games as amuse without wearying, and Malcolm often wondered how he could have endured the tedium of the voyage without her sprightly companionship.

One day he had fallen into a light slumber, and she laid down the book from which she had been reading, and scanned his features, as his head rested against the large chair in which he usually reclined. Again that expression of perplexity with which she had first beheld him came back to her own face; suddenly Malcolm unclosed his eyes, startled, perhaps, into consciousness by her earnest gaze, and he asked, with a half smile,

"Why do you gaze so earnestly on my features, Grace? Am I looking worse to-day?"

"O no, sir! Heaven forbid! I trust that you are better. But something in your face seems so familiar to me that I try to remember where I could have seen it before we met on the steamer."

"Some accidental resemblance, or, perhaps, you have met me before you left New Orleans. How long is it since you went to France?"

"Nearly seven years;" and she paused as if painful memories were connected with her departure.

"Did you live in the city?"

"I was at school there."

Her reserve on the subject was so evident that Malcolm said no more; and in a few hours the conversation passed from his mind, never, in all probability, to be recalled but for a circumstance that occurred a few days afterward, which poured a flood of light on the antecedents of his young companion, and brought vividly back to his own mind occurrences which had nearly faded from it.

Grace Dalton excelled in drawing. Malcolm was first made aware of it by an outline of his own head he found on the blank leaf of a book she had been reading. The sketch was so spirited that he begged of her a sight of her portfolio.

She at once complied, and picture after picture passed through his hands, each one eliciting praises which they really merited, until the collection was nearly exhausted.

At length Malcolm took up a scene which struck him as familiar; though for many moments he could not recall its locality. Gradually the mists of time cleared away, and the

yard belonging to the house once occupied by Withers arose before him, together with the moss-grown façade of the old building which fronted it. The windows of one room were open, and this he recognized as the sitting-room occupied by him.

He recalled the mysterious disappearance of his daughter, as described by Madame S——, and turned his gaze upon the young girl opposite to him, to see if he could trace any resemblance in her piquant face to the harsh features of Withers. She was bending down over a small bit of cardboard, on which the blurred outline of a head was visible. He glanced at what seemed so completely to absorb her, and started. It had the same peculiar formation he had often noticed in that of Withers—a marked deficiency in conscientiousness and benevolence; this, in connection with his recently-aroused suspicions, caused him to hold out his hand, and ask,

“May I see that sketch?”

She blushed, and withheld it, as she said,

“It is among the first things I ever drew. It is not worth looking at.”

“It seemed to interest you deeply.”

“Because it is a blurred resemblance of one that was dear to me.”

“That renders me doubly anxious to see it; for I think from the glimpse I obtained of it that I once knew the original.”

“Oh, *did* you?” she eagerly exclaimed. “Then you may be able to tell me what I so earnestly desire to know: may resolve all my doubts.”

She paused, deeply, painfully embarrassed; and Malcolm wondered if she could possibly be aware of what was so well known to himself; for that she was really the daughter of Withers he had now made up his mind. He drew the sketch from her hand without any resistance on her part, and at a glance recognized the saturnine features of his quondam associate.

He looked compassionately on the young girl before him, and she read the expression of his features with evident anguish. Malcolm saw the suffering, but was unable to account for it. She looked up pallid as death, and breathed in faint tones,

"You knew him, then?"

"I did—and he was your father?"

"Yes—that was my first attempt to draw his likeness, but here is a better one, drawn from memory."

She produced another head from a pocket in the portfolio, and unfolding the tissue paper in which it was carefully enveloped, held up an idealized resemblance of her father. It was happier, brighter, more youthful-looking than the Withers either of them could remember; but still it was like.

"Your memory is faithful, Grace," said Malcolm. "How old were you when you last parted from your father?"

"Twelve years of age."

"Will you tell me your history, my dear girl, as far back as you can remember it."

"It is my purpose to do so, if you will answer a question I wish to ask you."

"I will, to the best of my ability." She went on.

"I now remember you, Mr. Malcolm. I saw you once through the window when you were at the old house in New Orleans. I was in the garden, and my father made a sign to me not to come in while you were with him. Mr. Malcolm, I ask you, if you were a sincere friend to my father, and now he is in his grave, would you refrain from making public that which would cast a reproach on his memory?"

"I believe I may safely answer yes to both queries; for the latter I have already done. I know more of his affairs than any other living man."

"Then Providence must have led me to you, as the friend I so much need. You will aid the child in pursuit of justice without giving the name of the parent to—"

She stopped as if unable to pronounce the word that suggested itself. Malcolm kindly said,

"I do not know that I clearly understand the extent of your information, my dear girl; nor what your ulterior purposes may be. Confide in me as readily as you would in your mother if she were living, and I assure you your confidence shall be as sacred. I believe that I can clear up all that is mysterious to you in the history of your father, and painful as it must be to both of us, I promise to satisfy all your doubts—only confide in me."

Grace seemed to struggle with strong emotion for several moments—and she then said,

"Since I have been old enough to reflect, painful doubts have always filled my mind concerning my sudden departure from New Orleans, and the large sum of money embarked with me. My father was assassinated as you know; and O,

Mr. Malcolm! since the death of Mrs. Dalton, I have discovered that the fortune invested for me in the English funds amounted to the exact sum supposed to have been taken on that terrible night. It was a blow that nearly destroyed me, but I gradually recovered calmness, and I am now on my return to my native land to discover, if possible, the rightful owners of the money, and restore it to them."

Malcolm listened with deep interest. He said,

"But my child you will render yourself penniless by acting thus."

"I am accomplished, I have patience: I can make a living for myself. Will not this be a thousand times better than retaining any portion of that money which must prove a curse to me?"

"You are right, Grace, and the noble act of the child must redeem the fault of the parent. I know those to whom this money rightfully belongs; they are two lovely and amiable sisters, who will not permit you to impoverish yourself utterly, even to fulfill an act of justice. Strange it is, but I had already thought of seeking the protection of one of these ladies for you, on our arrival in Louisiana."

"Tell me of her: let me know how I can best make restitution," said the young girl, with interest; and as delicately as possible Malcolm unfolded the various links in that history of the past which made all clear before her.

During this recital Grace shed many tears; but she was glad to see her path made plain before her, to perform a deed of justice she had firmly made up her mind to accomplish at the cost of any sacrifice or suffering to herself.

Malcolm was deeply interested in this development of character in one so young and unprotected as this girl; and he mentally resolved that he would shield her from the consequences of the restitution thus nobly made, as far as lay in his power. His will was already made, but he could add a codicil bequeathing to Grace Dalton a sufficient sum to render her independent of labor.

By his advice she retained the name given her by her adopted mother, as that of Withers had too many painful associations connected with it to be willingly resumed.

And thus they voyaged toward the haven where so much that was interesting to the hearts of both was to be accomplished. During the latter portion of the trip the weather was tempestuous, and Malcolm suffered so severely that serious fears were entertained that he would never reach the end of his journey alive. When they entered the Mississippi he rallied a little, but reached New Orleans in a state of exhaustion that very nearly resembled death.

A few days' rest there enabled him to recruit sufficiently to undertake another journey, which he firmly believed would be his last pilgrimage on earth. Grace insisted on accompanying him, and together they ascended the river.



## CHAPTER XXX.

It is again a bright evening in spring, and the Grange is in its highest beauty. The magnolias are in full blossom, and flowers brighten every portion of the neatly kept yard.

A family groupe had assembled upon the verandah in front of the cottage. Miss Harrington, as fair and contented as ever, was seated beside a lovely but matronly-looking woman who played with an infant that nestled on her lap, while a boy of four summers gambols at her feet.

Adèle is still beautiful, and there is an expression of ineffable content and happiness on her features, which gives the assurance that in her married experience she has met with nothing to destroy her dream of love and confidence in him she has chosen to walk through life with.

Evelyn and Pauline are near the outer gate, busily engaged in training some wandering vines which have grown too rapidly of late. The elevated and serene expression habitual to his features has not been lost in the struggle of life, for he has honorably and manfully labored for daily bread for himself and those he loves; and he has found exceeding joy and reward in the comfort he has thus been enabled to secure to the cottage home in which dwells his beautiful Peri, as the dispenser of peace and happiness to all around her.

How shall I describe Pauline? I have said at the commencement of our story that she was not beautiful; but now the decision seems unjust. On the brow of the conscientious and perfectly developed woman is a light and serenity which is the offspring of long suffering, struggled through until the brighter day dawned, and the dove of peace once more folded her wings over her sorely-tried spirit. All is peace within, and now joy dwells in her heart, in the presence of her beloved sister and her noble husband.

A laugh, blithe as in the first bright day of her youth, gushes forth at some witticism from Evelyn; and its ringing mirthful sound is wafted, on the still evening air, to the weary dulling senses of a pale phantom, propped up by pillows in a carriage that approaches at a slow pace.

He recognized the voice, and new vitality seemed infused in his languid frame by its tones. He made an effort to lean forward to obtain a view of the face he had so yearned to look on once more before all earthly things faded from his vision; but exhausted by the sudden effort, he fell back insensible.

A young girl who occupied the carriage with him uttered a slight cry of alarm, and called to the driver,

"Stop, John. This must be the place; and I believe Mr. Malcolm is dying."

John hurriedly drew up opposite to the gate by which Evelyn and Pauline stood, and requested permission to bring in a gentleman who was extremely ill, and fainting from exhaustion.

Such an appeal was never made in vain to a humane heart,

and Pauline hurried into the house immediately to have an apartment made ready for his reception. During the next few moments all was bustle and confusion, for the invalid lay so long insensible after he was taken to his room, that Evelyn began to fear he never would revive.

So emaciated, so changed was Malcolm that his rival failed to recognize him, as he lay, apparently in death, before him. It was not until he again unclosed his eyes and looked around him, that a suspicion of his identity came to Evelyn. Then his first emotion was one of annoyance that this new trial should come to Pauline when her pathway seemed at last freed from the shadow he had cast over it.

Why Malcolm should come there to die was incomprehensible to him; and who this young lady could be, who so sedulously busied herself in recovering him from his swoon, he was equally at a loss to determine. At length Malcolm revived sufficiently to speak, and feebly motioning to Grace Dalton, he said,

"My child, leave me alone with Mr. Evelyn a little while; but do not yet betray who I am to the rest of the family."

She left the room, and the sick man turned to Evelyn.

"I see that you know me now. Sit near me, I beg, for my voice is too weak to make itself heard far off."

Evelyn sat down beside the bed, and Malcolm continued,

"You must wonder why I came hither, and I read some such feeling in your face. You see that I am dying, but I could not leave earth without once more beholding Pauline.

She is the only woman I have ever truly loved, and bitterly have I suffered from my cruel hesitation between the two sisters. Will you not bring her to my side, that I may entreat her forgiveness for the past?"

Evelyn hesitated. He at length said,

"Pauline is not like other women. She has borne much, but she has at last triumphed, and I scarcely think it right to cloud the peace she has so struggled to regain by seeking this interview. Pardon me, Mr. Malcolm, if I say that your former conduct toward her does not authorize me to bring my sister face to face with you at such a time as this."

Malcolm groaned.

"O I have deserved this; but I *must* see her. So much depends on it that, if you knew all, you could not refuse. By the love Pauline once cherished for me, I conjure her to see a dying man who is now only anxious to make atonement for the past. Let her decide for herself, and, if I judge her right, she will never pardon you for concealing my presence from her until it is too late for her to speak peace to the repentant soul which has bitterly expiated its wrong toward her."

His agitation increased to such a degree that Evelyn became alarmed, and, after a few moments' reflection, he promised to go at once and inform Pauline of his earnest wish. Before leaving the room, at Malcolm's request, he gave him some stimulating drops which revived him sufficiently to enable him to be raised up and supported by pillows. He then said,

"Now, Mr. Evelyn, I have one more request to make of you: I entreat you to send for the nearest clergyman, and have him here as speedily as possible. The service I require at his hands shall be made known to him when he arrives."

Evelyn thought that service was easily understood, when summoned to the bed of a dying man, but he left the room without reply, and went in search of Pauline.

He found her preparing nourishment for the sick guest herself, and begged that she would come into the yard with him while he spoke a few words with her in private.

"In a moment," she replied, and after transferring the cup to the servant of Malcolm, to be taken in to him immediately, she joined Evelyn, looking as composed as usual.

It was evident to him that, as yet, she had gained no clew to the identity of Malcolm. He paused, embarrassed how to begin, and she looked up at him in surprise. She read something in his eyes that perplexed her, and her fair cheek faintly colored, as she asked,

"What is it, Philip? Have you any thing painful to tell me?"

"I fear it may prove so, Pauline. I fear that the seal so resolutely placed on past emotions is about to be broken. I would that he had spared you this, dear sister."

"*He—who?*" asked Pauline, standing rigid and pale before him. "Is it—is it—"

Her voice died away in an indistinct murmur; she could not utter the name that sprang to her lip.

Evelyn understood her, and said, gently,  
"It is Malcolm—and he asks to see you."

She seemed as one stricken into stone; and after a painful pause she spoke more as if communing with herself than with him.

"What! that pale shadow my prince among men! My noble—noble one, brought to this! O! I must see him—I must see him."

Evelyn gazed on her—heard the intense feeling breathed into the tones of her voice with amazement. Was it possible that through all these long years Pauline had continued to cherish this hopeless love? Even amid the darkness and silence of time had it still maintained its sway over her? Verily, such indeed seemed the truth; and with sorrowful regret he came to the unwelcome conclusion that for her the anguish of the past was about to be renewed. He gravely replied,

"Malcom sent me but now with an earnest request to see you. I would have denied him, but he insisted, and I felt compelled to inform you of his wish, though I do it very unwillingly."

"He was right. I never could have forgiven you if you had refused his dying request. Is he ready to receive me now?"

"I believe he is."

"Then let us go to him at once. My own heart shall be my only counselor in this."

With her hand pressed upon her heart to quell its wild throbbing, Pauline followed him to the door of the room in

which Malcom lay. She paused at the threshold until Evelyn went in and announced her; then as he came out the pale girl glided in, and in another moment was beside the couch of him whom she had so truly, so unwaveringly loved.

Malcolm held out his emaciated hand, and she clasped it in both her own, and gazed into his eyes as if hers were spell-bound to that changed, yet still nobly beautiful face. At length he found voice to say,

"Pauline, I have returned to you in death, to tell you what in life I never dared reveal. I have loved you hopelessly for years. Forgive—forgive the past: I was mad; I was under a fatal delusion, from which I recovered too late for your happiness or my own."

"I know it all," murmured Pauline; "and this knowledge it was that brought back to me peace and self-respect."

"Then you have forgiven me, my own love? and I may venture to make the proposal for which I came hither."

"What is it?" she faintly asked.

"Let me die calling you by the holy name of wife. I entreat you to give me the legal right to endow you with the wealth which I would gladly have devoted to rescuing you from ruin. O! Pauline, hear me before you reply. I am a changed man since those days. I have bitterly repented of the evil that flowed from my selfish madness. I would have aided to repair it then, but he who has passed away refused all overtures of assistance from me. I made many, but he spurned them all. Could he now look down on us and breathe his wishes into your soul, I firmly believe he would

bid you accede to the request which enables me to perform an act of justice to one I have so heavily wronged."

Pauline was weeping quietly, and her spirit seemed fainting within her, at the proposal of this mockery of the solemn ceremonial of marriage, which the icy hand of death must so soon dissolve. Yet how refuse a request thus urged? and from him to whom her soul was knit by ties that could never be broken.

"You will not—you can not refuse me this, Pauline?" he again urged, and his pale, eager face appealed to her even more powerfully than his words. She at length said,

"I consent: it will at least give me the right to be near you at the last, and that will be worth purchasing at any cost. Let it be as you will."

"Thanks—thanks, best, dearest Pauline; I felt assured that my appeal to your gentle heart would not be in vain. Remain beside me, love, until the minister I requested Evelyn to send for, arrives. He little dreams of the service I really require from him;" and one of his old smiles gleamed over his wasted features, lighting them up with a beauty that seemed to her almost divine.

To these long-severed hearts the communion of the next hour seemed but as a moment, and when the announcement came that the clergyman had arrived, they both heard it with surprise. Pauline left the room for a few moments, to apprise her family of her intentions: they heard them with pain, but without remonstrance; for they were quite willing that she should do whatever she considered best for her own future peace of mind. Her forbearance—her long suffering,



had purchased the right to this confidence on the part of those who loved her.

Soon a groupe collected around the chair in which the invalid had been placed, and a white-robed figure kneeled on a cushion at his side, while the clergyman performed the solemn and impressive ceremony which united them until death should part them ; and each one shuddered at the word as if the icy phantom was already in their midst, breathing his chilling breath on both bridegroom and bride ; for Pauline, pale with agitation and intense feeling, looked as if ready to pass away with him to whom she so tenderly clung.

After this strange union, no congratulations were offered, for each one felt that they must be a painful mockery to the sad hearts thus united. Only a silent kiss and pressure of the hand to the bride were given, and then all save Pauline retired from the room.

As Grace Dalton was passing out, Malcolm recalled her.

"Come hither, my dear girl," he caressingly said. "This is the lady to whose protection I wish to bequeath you. I have told her your history, and, like myself, she is filled with admiration for your honorable intention to do justice to her family. She wishes, from this hour, to claim you as her adopted sister."

Grace timidly turned to Pauline, who clasped her in her arms and imprinting a kiss on her cheek, said,

"A sacred bequest will you be to me, dear girl. Consider me, in future, as a near and dear relative, who will feel bound to promote your happiness in every possible manner."

Grace expressed her thanks with emotion, and then glided from the room, leaving the two thus suddenly united to such communion as yet remained to them on earth.

When they were alone, Pauline again knelt upon the cushion at his feet and bowed her head upon the clasped hands of Malcolm, and wept in anguish while she murmured;

"You must not die, you must not die and leave me desolate. God will never try me thus fearfully; long ere this my measure of suffering has been full. *He* is too merciful to bring this crowning anguish to my lot. Hope for yourself, my best-loved, and you may yet be restored; the mind can triumph over physical ills—believe that you will recover, and you will be given back to me in all your native strength."

"I would that it might be so, dear Pauline; and I feel nerved anew for the struggle since I feel that life now has something worth striving for. To live with you, for you, is a beautiful hope; rise, my darling wife, from that lowly position and pillow your head upon my heart; there should be your place of rest and shelter—thus let us pray to the Eternal that our united lives may not so soon be severed. That I may be restored to prove to you how sincere, how tender is my affection for you."

The fervent aspirations thus sent up seemed indeed to be answered. Slowly, but surely, Malcolm won his way back to health; Dr. Germain attended him daily, and Pauline nursed him so assiduously that the physician declared that to her care the sick man owed his recovery, much more than to his

skill. A bright and Eden-like day was it to the devoted wife when Malcolm again walked forth in the light of heaven with the hue of recovered health upon his cheek and the tranquil light of happiness in his eyes. Pauline felt as if all her trials were more than compensated by this great mercy.

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## CONCLUSION.

A few more words, and our task is completed.

Malcolm and his beloved wife removed to a beautiful place in the vicinity of New Orleans, which he owned, and took with them Grace Dalton, whom they treated in every respect as a near relative.

Miss Gertrude had accumulated quite an independence in her six years of toil, and she relinquished her school much to the regret of her pupils and their parents, and accompanied her favorite niece to her new home. Malcolm refused to share the money restored by his young protégée, and the whole sum was paid over to Evelyn as the portion of his wife.

With the consent of Adèle he returned to Grace the sum of five thousand dollars, which was settled on her; and the act by which she had impoverished herself did not long go unrewarded. The Jew, Bondy, was found dead in the room in which Withers had been assassinated, with a written confession of his agency in the robbery beside him.

In a sudden paroxysm of disappointed avarice at his unavailing search for the concealed treasure, he had committed suicide. Malcolm was thus enabled to regain the property belonging to Withers which the robbers had appropriated.

Mrs. Ruskin heard of the marriage of Pauline to her early lover with amazement, mingled with many envious pangs; for Louise, after gaining the deserved reputation of being the greatest flirt in New Orleans, had recently married a young man as frivolous as herself, who was dependent on his salary in a large mercantile establishment for a support.

The sisters are still living in prosperity and happiness, and they annually meet, during the summer season, at the beautiful house of Evelyn in Virginia. It is confidently whispered that a reunion of the whole family will take place at New Orleans next winter, at the marriage of Grace Dalton to Algernon, a younger brother of Philip Evelyn.

THE END.

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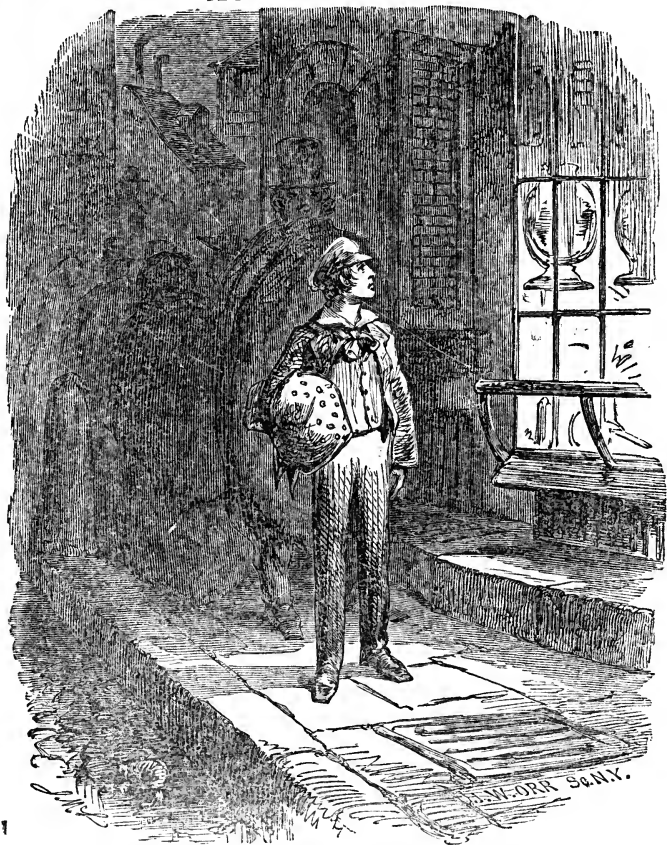
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